"I SEE SOMETHING BETTER SOON"

A STUDY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AT WARAKURNA REMOTE COMMUNITY

by

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It will be said that a despot gives his subjects the assurance of civil tranquillity. Very well, but what does it profit them, if those wars against other powers which result from a despot's ambition, if his insatiable greed, and the oppressive demands of his administration, cause more desolation than civil strife could cause ... There is peace in dungeons but is that enough to make dungeons desirable?

*Social Contract*
Rousseau

The title, *I See Something Better Soon*, is part of a statement that was made by Hayden, an Aboriginal respondent in this research, as a school-community partnership developed in Warakurna between 1991 and 1994 (see page 283).
I hereby declare that the work herein, now submitted as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is the result of my own investigations, and all references to ideas and work of other researchers have been specifically acknowledged. I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Jim Heslop
31 March 1998
ABSTRACT

Aboriginal people have historically found themselves at the margins of decision-making processes within Australian society. Non-Aboriginal people have often attempted to interpret Aboriginal aspirations but have done so within the context of preserving their positions of dominance. In regard to schooling, Aboriginal students have generally encountered very little success. They have viewed their experiences as unpleasant and have found the curriculum to be largely irrelevant in meeting their aspirations. Moreover, they have been exposed to teaching practices that have actively worked to socialise them into accepting a perception of the world that is contrary to that embodied in their traditional culture.

The provision of schooling in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (Western Australia) is a recent phenomenon. Apart from some schooling that had been provided by the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) at Warburton Ranges since the 1930s, the first service throughout the Lands was offered on an itinerant basis from 1977. Early developments encouraged a close partnership between the non-Aboriginal teacher and Aboriginal community based on the principle of satisfying mutual needs. That is, much of the resourcing of the school as well as meeting the personal needs of the teacher came from community sources. On the other hand, the teaching ‘expertise’ was provided by the non-Aboriginal teacher.

During the 1980s the resourcing of schools was taken over by the Education Department and many teachers found that they did not need the help of community members anymore. As the barbed-wire fences were erected around the school buildings the non-Aboriginal teachers concluded that the Aboriginal people had nothing to offer the schools anymore and the previously close partnership quickly dissolved. At the same time, however, a contrary trend emerged throughout the wider society. Parents were encouraged to enter into a stronger relationship with local schools through the agency of school councils and began to contribute their expertise and support to the process of school improvement.

The main aim of my research was to investigate the interest of Aboriginal parents living in the Warakurna community to enter into a partnership with the non-Aboriginal-dominated school
that would allow local aspirations and values to be expressed in school processes. I wanted to look at the extent to which Aboriginal people desired to take up positions of significant decision-making authority within the school. A Reference Group of significant Aboriginal men was established by the community to assist me in this study which was undertaken between March 1992 and December 1994.

The findings of the research were surprising in two ways. First, interest in governing the school quickly achieved reality through the activity of a Parents’ Council. The work of the council then spread from the school to influence other sections of community activity. The council also took on the role of advocating parent involvement in schools in other Lands’ communities. Second, the process of parent involvement came at a considerable cost. Significant conflict arose between various sections of the community at Warakurna, the health of individuals suffered, and some of the myths upon which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal behaviour was premised were exposed.

The main finding of the research was that, once they were given the opportunity, the Aboriginal people showed a desire to be more fully involved in decision-making roles within the community. While achievements in particular fields of responsibility were often strongly resisted by non-Aboriginal stakeholders, at the conclusion of the study, clear progress had been made and was positively received by the Aboriginal people at Warakurna.
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CHAPTER ONE

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OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

1.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to define the context and purpose of my inquiry. The chapter is divided into the following sections:

1. The reasons for the study.

2. The location of the community under investigation, Warakurna, and a brief history of the provision of schooling to the community between 1977 and 1991.

3. The structure and operation of Warakurna school at the commencement of the investigation.

4. The terms and abbreviations that have been used during the study.

5. A brief introduction to the chapters in this dissertation.

1.1 The objectives of the investigation

Marsh (1986, p. 7) states that:

Everybody in our society seems to know what schools should teach. After all, there is hardly any adult person who has not experienced at least eight years of primary and secondary schooling, and, in the case of parents with children at school, is not involved in education again.

Similarly, McGaw, Piper, Banks and Evans (1991, p. 11) claims that, from the commencement
of "public schooling over a century ago, the home and school effectively entered into an agree-
ment to share responsibility for student learning". Despite changes in the role of formal educa-
tion, in the structure of families, and in patterns of employment, particularly with increased
geographic mobility, "they [parents and school] remain partners in the educational process"

81-84) describes this partnership as complex, full of ambiguities and contradictions. The Council
does, however, observe an active and assertive questioning of the learning experiences offered to
students largely because "parents see education as a means of helping their children compete for
the better jobs" (1991, p. 83) while teachers generally stress schooling's wider purpose. The
parent-school partnership appears to be vigorous, at least on a periodic basis, and is observed in
a variety of forms ranging from an individual parent and teacher discussing specific issues per-
taining to a particular student to powerful interest groups criticising the education system gener-
ally and demanding change. That is, "education intersects in a very practical way with the beliefs
and values of all members of the community" (National Board of Employment, Education and

That some form of partnership has historically existed between schools and communities needs
to be seen as an expression of largely non-Aboriginal involvement in formal schooling. Such a
strong partnership has not long existed between schools and Aboriginal parents and communities
and, in a number of places, may not exist even today. The nature of the partnership between the
 Aboriginal community and the non-Aboriginal-dominated school is described in the National
Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (1994) which states that
"Indigenous peoples ... are still not sufficiently listened to, and heard, in the establishment or
modification of policies, programs and practices that impact on their educational experiences"
(1994, p. 9). The policy also emphasises that Aboriginal people have historically had little influence in educational decision-making and have, therefore, had to experience schooling that has not met reasonable standards of accessibility, relevance, appropriateness, sensitivity and effecti-
The Western Australian Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (1987, p. 1) reinforces the national review by characterising the current relationship between Aboriginal parents and schools as 'assimilationist' in that non-Aboriginal (mainly European) systems and beliefs are considered to be more important than Aboriginal values and practices. As Crawford (1989, p. 14) states, "to succeed in western education means to renounce Aboriginality and to retain Aboriginality means to fail in school".

In response to the perception that schooling does not assist Aboriginal people to achieve their aims, there is a clear need for individual schools to analyse the extent to which they are able to address the needs and aspirations of the local Aboriginal community through the production of learning and other outcomes. An aspect of that analysis is that schools must form a close partnership with Aboriginal communities in order to develop an educational philosophy similar to that described earlier by McGaw et al. (1991) and the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (1991). The establishment of a genuine partnership, however, may require a shift in the power relations that currently exist between the school and community and so emphasise political processes.

Research evidence as well as government, quasi-government and Aboriginal committee reports consistently indicate that Aboriginal parents and children have a positive attitude towards formal schooling because they believe that addressing the contemporary situation of Aboriginal people and their communities depends, at least to some extent, on them being successful in the schooling process (Fitzgerald, 1976; Watts, 1981; the Western Australian Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, 1987; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, 1989; National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 1994, p. 4). Few Aboriginal students, however, are currently achieving 'success' at school by any definition; non-attendance levels and rates of misbehaviour are very high, and "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders remain concerned that their views are not heard" (National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 1994, p. 2).

In response to this apparent paradox, my research investigated ways in which members of the
Aboriginal community at Warakurna, a remote location in Western Australia, became involved in governing the operations of the local school between 1992 and 1994. It described and analysed the process by which the community, the members of which had received very little formal Western schooling, moved towards assuming governance over the school. I particularly focused on the political restructuring that occurred and investigated the shift in the balance of power from non-Aboriginal control to Aboriginal governance. I examined the process of change and the effect that change initiatives had on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants, both those who desired to be involved in the change initiative as well as those who were affected through indirect means. The change process was so rapid, however, that it could not be contained to the school. An important but secondary objective, therefore, was to investigate how the Aboriginal community increased its control over the Warakurna community and the region in general.

In summary, the main objective of the study was to observe, participate in and analyse the development of a genuine school-community partnership between 1992 and 1994. An important but secondary objective was to examine how the Aboriginal community increased its control over community and region in general.

1.2 The location of Warakurna and the history of schooling between 1977 and 1991

1.2.1 Geographic location of Warakurna

Warakurna is located in the semi-desert Ngaanyatjarra Lands region of Western Australia approximately 1700 kms east of Perth and between the Gibson Desert to the north-west and the Great Victoria Desert to the south-east (see Map 1.1). The nearest major towns are Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, approximately 900 kms to the east, and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia, about 1000 kms to the south.

Warakurna is situated at the eastern end of the Rawlinson Range and is about 5 kms north of the Giles meteorological station. There are a number of permanent water sources near Warakurna which have historically drawn Aboriginal people, called Yarnangu, to live for lengthy periods of
The cliffs and gorges of this part of the Rawlinson Ranges are also of considerable religious significance and there are a number of Dreaming stories that are regularly commemorated (journal entry, 7 February, 1992, pp. 1-2).

Between 1948 and 1970, the Yarnangu throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands were housed at Warburton Ranges for protection against possible effects of the Woomera rocket testing program. Nevertheless, there remained groups of Yarnangu who moved through the Warakurna district drawing upon the rockholes but also relying to some extent on the personnel at the Giles meteorological station for food and water as well as medical and other supplies.

Map 1.1
The location of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands within Australia (scale: 500km by 300km)
During the early 1970s, the Yarnangu were permitted to move from Warburton to Warakurna and they settled about 15 kms south of the present site. In 1975, the present location was established and the development of Warakurna became part of the outstation movement that enabled communities at Mantamaru (Jameson), Papulankutja (Blackstone) and Irrunytju (Wingellina) to be settled (Glass, 1990, p. 9). The families who ‘belong’ to Warakurna because their spiritual home is located in the area include Reid, Golding, Burke, Porter, and Newberry. A number of other families, however, have moved in since 1975 because their land is within approximately 80 kilometres of Warakurna.

Between 1975 to 1982, Warakurna was incorporated into the Pitjantjatjara Council and received substantial federal government aid under the Whitlam policy of ‘self-determination’. The implementation of that policy as well as the subsequent Fraser initiative called ‘self-management’ (Ayres, 1987, p. 372; Crawford, 1989, p. 11) saw the rapid development of services and facilities. A shop, school, clinic and workshop were built, and a substantial power station was installed. In 1982, Warakurna joined other Lands communities in setting up the Ngaanyatjarra Lands’ Council. This helped consolidate the provision of services to the area and assisted in the physical development and stabilising of the community. The population reached about 250 people in 1994 which made Warakurna one of the largest communities in the area.

1.2.2 An overview of the history of the provision of schooling services to Warakurna between 1977 and 1992

I am basing this review on the results of interviews with eleven non-Aboriginal (Walypala) teachers who worked in outstation schools in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands between 1977 and 1986. It should be noted that because Warburton school was not considered an outstation school during these years, it is not featured in the following discussion. The use of the term, ‘outstation’, was discontinued from about 1986 and was replaced with ‘community’.

The provision of formal schooling services in Warakurna commenced in 1977 when an itinerant-teacher, Bruce Cornish, was appointed to the Lands. He was based at Warburton but had the
responsibility of facilitating schooling in Jameson, Blackstone, Wingellina and Warakurna, the only permanent communities that existed in the district at the time. Mr Cornish approached his task by spending one week in four in each community. During the week when he was in a community, he would provide schooling and prepare resources for Yarnangu teachers aides to use while he was away in other places.

It is reasonable to conclude that with one teacher looking after four schools, each with about 30 students, learning outcomes were poor and the profile of schooling was low. According to Bruce Cornish (audio-tape interview, 2 May 1992), the schools functioned efficiently during the week when he was present, but operated poorly or not at all when he was in another place. The teachers-aide (all women) were apparently not respected, particularly by the older boys, materials were destroyed, and the schools themselves were crudely made bough shelters with no security, furnishings or appropriate fittings. Mr Cornish feels as though his placement in the Lands was primarily a response to the political pressure placed on the Western Australian Education Department by residents of the emerging communities.

In 1979, two Walypala teachers and later three (from August 1979) were placed in the outstations. One teacher lived at Blackstone and was also supposed to look after Jameson, one was at Wingellina, and another was based at Warakurna. I was one of those teachers. Interviews with the other teachers (Murray Wells and Peter McGlew) make it clear that, in their opinion, they were placed in their communities because of local political pressure and not in response to an Education Department strategic plan for the improvement in the quality of schooling in the Lands. The Wingellina school, for example, was established in a transportable shed with 75 chairs, one student desk and an establishment grant of $32.85. As the teacher, I was advised by the superintendent of Aboriginal Education (Colin Mounsey) to collect any other school requirements from the Warburton school about 250 kms to the east (Wingellina school journal, 1979, p. 1). The schools at Blackstone and Warakurna were brush shelters while the one at Jameson was a transportable building. Jameson school was rarely opened during 1979 because the teacher, Murray Wells, felt that the community was unstable (audio-tape interview, 2 May 1992).
It is the opinion of the teachers (audio-tape interview, Wells, 2 May 1992) that the local community had a sense of ownership over the schools in the early days. The Yarnangu, for example, built the school shelters at Blackstone and Warakurna and community funds and resources helped make up the shortfall between what the schools were provided with by the Education Department and what the teachers felt was required to set up fully functioning school services. The teachers and the community quickly formed a partnership based on mutual dependence with the community supplying the physical requirements to enable the school to function and the teacher offering ‘expertise’ in the provision of schooling to young people.

During the period when schools were being established in the Lands, the teachers felt as though they were ‘charting foreign waters’ in determining what the criteria were for making sound educational decisions and developing learning programs (audio-tape interview, Baker, 5 April, 1980). There was little support from external agents and the teachers felt frustrated at not knowing what they were meant to be doing in the schools. There were no specific guidelines on how Walypala teachers were expected to implement the emerging rhetoric of the time that education should “blend traditional Aboriginal education with the development of basic communication, numeracy and literacy skills as required in Western society” (Schools Commission, 1975, section 5:1; Fitzgerald, 1976, p. 201). Rather, teachers felt as though they were “walking from one crisis to another whilst being followed by a group of children” (audio-tape interview, Lex Leslie, 7 September 1993). The notion expressed by authors like McClay (1988, p. 270) that schools needed to “centre their activities upon assisting Aboriginal people to fulfil their own aspirations” was seen to be a noble but distant objective. Some teachers believed that it was an ambition that did not necessarily fit the situation in the Lands, because of its unique ‘problems’, and I found that I simply could not construct professional practice from the related themes of self-determination, the Aboriginal role in schooling, and helping the Yarnangu to achieve their aspirations.

It is reasonable to conclude that, despite the existence of a strong partnership between the Walypala teachers and the Yarnangu community in many places, the early groups of teachers in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands still “impose[d] their conceptions of reality and the future upon a group of
people who did not necessarily want to accept them" (McClay, 1988, p. 270). They tended to ignore the nature of the aspirations of the people because the requirements of personal and professional 'survival' were paramount. The purpose of schooling was interpreted from a non-Aboriginal context and few external agents ever objected to such a conception.

From 1980, each Lands community had one Walypala teacher. This allowed for the commencement of on-going schooling programs. The Aboriginal Education Branch in Perth began to address deficiencies in resourcing the schools and teachers were given the opportunity to be involved in specialised training courses conducted by tertiary institutions and Education Department personnel. Over time, the Walypala teachers became self-sufficient both in the provision of physical needs (food and accommodation) and with the establishment of more sophisticated buildings. As a result, the informal partnership and mutual support that had existed between the teachers and the local Yarnangu community quickly deteriorated (audio-tape interviews: Wells, 2 May 1992; O'Hara, 4 May 1992; Dowsett, 4 May 1992).

A further development in schooling in the Lands was that pre-schools (taking in five-year-old children) and pre-pre-schools (catering for four-year-old children) were progressively opened from 1980. These centres worked to socialise children according to a Walypala perspective to be ready for formal schooling in later years. At the same time, the bilingual education project that commenced at Warburton Ranges in 1977 was discontinued (Beazley, 1984, p. 6). The apparent lack of success of bilingual programs in Education Department schools, at least in the Lands, confused many teachers as to how to make the schools culturally consistent with the local community (audio-tape interview, Baker, 4 May 1992). Many teachers concluded that the best schooling for Yarnangu students was that which centred on a Western philosophy and curriculum.

A synthesis of the eleven interviews that I conducted to compose this section revealed that there were a number of common problems faced by the Walypala teachers between 1977 and 1992. Some of them may still be apparent today. The problems included:
1. High levels of non-attendance among students, particularly teenagers.

2. The effects of substance abuse, particularly petrol sniffing, by adolescent Yarnangu.

3. A sense among teachers that it was difficult to answer questions like, ‘What do I teach?’, ‘What do parents expect from the school?’, and ‘What should be the vision of the school?’.

4. Harsh living conditions such as living in caravans from 1976 to 1981, geographic and social isolation, lack of security for property, and little financial and other compensation from the employer.

5. A perception that the Lands was an 'educational backwater' resulting in a fear by teachers that curriculum changes and other educational innovations developed outside the area and aimed mainly at non-Aboriginal students were passing them by.

6. Education being more visibly directed by responses to political pressure than was apparent in the rest of the system and this sometimes prevented the implementation of strategic planning that would maximise learning outcomes for students.

7. Inexperienced and sometimes inappropriate staff being sent to the Lands (including a high number of graduates as well as principals in their first promotional position) who had no background in Aboriginal education or sensitivity towards the schooling needs of the Yarnangu.

From 1982, the physical size of schools began to grow to accommodate increasing student numbers and, in 1985, all outstation schools were upgraded in their promotional status (Education Department, February 1985) in order to attract more experienced principals, though not necessarily in the skills of Aboriginal schooling.
In the late 1980s, schools at Tjirrkarli and Tjukarla were opened and, in 1992, a school at Wanarn was established. There are currently (1997) eight community schools in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (not including Warburton) each with between two and five Walypala teachers and with student numbers ranging from about seven to seventy.

1.3 The structure and operation of Warakurna school in February 1992

This section describes the structure and philosophy of Warakurna school as it existed in February 1992, the year my investigation commenced. In a sense, this section presents the ‘before’ picture of the school making it possible for the ‘after’ picture to be seen as a result of this study.

1.3.1 School structure

In February 1992, Warakurna school consisted of three teachers, two Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs) and about 28 students. The following points are relevant when reviewing the type of schooling that was being provided at the commencement of this investigation:

1. The school consisted of three classrooms, two toilet/shower blocks and an office-library. It was situated in the middle of the business precinct adjacent to the community office and shop and was the only public place with grass, air-conditioned rooms, toilets and showers. Therefore, most children and a few adults frequently used the facilities for purposes such as schooling, personal hygiene and recreation.

2. All young people between the ages of five and sixteen were expected to attend school and the community council would not employ any person under the age of 16. The council’s position was that children had to go to school “to stop the Education Department from taking away any of its buildings and sending them to other communities” (Warakurna community minutes, 5 May 1992).

3. Schooling commenced each day with the showering of students and the treatment
of their sores and cuts. The classroom-based learning program started a half-hour later and was broken only by morning recess when children were provided with a piece of fruit or bowl of soup and at lunch when they went home for a short time before returning for the afternoon program.

4. Children were divided into year stages pre-primary to Year 2, Year 3-6, and Year 7 to secondary level. AEWs were located in the junior and middle classes to assist classroom teachers according to a reasonably specific job description devised by the AEWs in consultation with the classroom teacher. Teachers ran their classes in line with their classroom policies which were framed within the context of the school vision statement and goals (as discussed in section 1.3.2).

5. Parents were nominally involved in the school through occasional meetings of the Aboriginal Student Support Parent Awareness Committee (ASSPA) and during special days (picnic sports, National Aborigines' Week, and bush tucker days). The AEWs and the District Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) acted as intermediaries between the school and community.

6. Communications with staff were achieved through a weekly bulletin ('Monday's Murmur'), staff meetings, school development days, professional development seminars, and informal contact during recess breaks.

1.3.2 Philosophy of the school

The vision of the school is a philosophical statement that establishes the parameters around which all plans and professional behaviour should be framed. It expresses the foundation or culture of the school and is an agreement between parents and teachers (Caldwell and Spinks, 1986, p. 22).

The depth of involvement by the community in devising the school vision before agreeing to it is problematic. In some school communities the agreement is typified by a process of acquiescing
to what has been created by the school and where the community has not played any active role in creating the vision and goals. In other schools, the nature of community involvement may be on a deeper level and the statement of vision or goals is truly a shared document of purpose which has been arrived at through the processes of consultation, discussion, and active negotiation and debate (1986, pp. 22-23).

In February 1992, the draft vision statement of the Warakurna school was that the school:

Exists as an integral part of the Warakurna community to produce academic, social, physical and aesthetic learning outcomes beyond the expectations that may be consistent with the context of the school while, at the same time, integrating Aboriginal culture into a variety of appropriate learning contexts. The end result will be that students can function effectively in their choice of the local or wider community and do so with a high positive self-esteem (Warakuma School, 1991).

This statement had apparently been endorsed by the community but the nature of that endorsement may be questioned in the light of the earlier discussion about the depth of agreement that may exist between the school and community. Nevertheless, the following goals were isolated by school staff in order to describe the features of the vision statement:

1. To create an environment where the learning outcomes of students are maximised.

2. To conduct learning experiences towards goals and in a way that is consistent with community expectations.

3. To integrate Aboriginal culture into learning experiences in such a way as to be a natural part of school functioning.

4. Students have a high self-esteem and play a positive role in the development of the community.
These goals reflected the philosophy that was outlined by the *Western Australian Aboriginal Education Strategic Plan (1990-1992)* (Ministry of Education, 1990). Initial examination of the vision statement and associated goals in February 1992 raised a number of questions. The nature of these questions endorsed the need to conduct research on ways of developing a genuine school-community partnership. The questions that needed to be answered were:

1. Who is involved in creating the environment (Goal One) and what is the depth of that involvement?

2. Who controls the learning experiences (Goal Two)? Do any Yarnangu have a role in fulfilling this goal? If so, to what extent is their involvement in the stages of planning, instruction and evaluation?

3. Who creates and implements the process and criteria where the culture of the Yarnangu is integrated into the learning experiences offered by the school (Goal Three)? If local culture is integrated into learning experiences, is it viewed as a natural part of school functioning or is it an artificial feature of the school program?

4. What is the nature of the development of the community (Goal Four) and who defines its elements?

As a result of the implementation of a policy of devolution devised by the *Western Australian Education Department (1990)*, all government-controlled schools were required to design a development plan that showed how resources were going to address particular priorities during the year (1990, p. 1). The plan was meant to be the result of participative decision-making by school staff and the local community (Angus, 1992, p. 4) and include mechanisms for accountability to the public (Ministry of Education, 1990, p. 1).

Following initial examination of the Warakurna school plan, I concluded that the Yarnangu community had not been involved in negotiations that arrived at the final plan. Moreover, it appeared
on the surface at least, that the *Yarnangu* had little interest in challenging that situation. In other words, the *Yarnangu* were prepared to accept or tolerate a situation where *Walypala* teachers made decisions on school philosophy and specific directions with no reference to the long-term aspirations or short-term needs of the community. There was no evidence of a dialogue ever having occurred between the *Yarnangu* and the *Walypala* regarding policy development in the school. Even deliberations by the ASSPA committee were restricted to matters concerning the funding of specific programs that had been suggested by the principal. These projects, like subsidising school camps and conducting programs in nutrition, had as their main priority, the role of preserving the school budget rather than endorsing a particular philosophical direction of the community. Issues that might have shaped the vision and ethos of the school were never discussed or certainly never minuted.

Because the partnership that existed between the school and community in February 1992 was vague and insignificant, it was appropriate to at least question the suitability of the school vision statement, goals and priorities as fitting the aspirations of the *Yarnangu* despite them having been ‘endorsed’ or perhaps ‘acquiesced with’, by the community. It was a reasonable conclusion that schooling proceeded from the perspective of *Walypala* teachers and with little regard for the *Yarnangu* community (Christie, 1984).

### 1.4 Terms and abbreviations that have been used in this research

The following terms have been regularly used in this dissertation to enhance description and/or because they are in common use in Warakurna:

1. **Ngaanyatjarra Lands** - the area represented by the central desert region of Western Australia which is occupied by Aboriginal people who speak the Ngaanyatjarra language as a first Aboriginal language.

2. **Outstation schools** - the term that was used between about 1975 and 1985 to refer to the schools that were located in communities in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (not including War-
burton Ranges).

3. *Yarnangu* - the Ngaanyatjarra word for ‘Aboriginal people’ who live in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

4. *Walypala* - the Ngaanyatjarra word for ‘white person’.

5. Non-Aboriginal - any individual who is not an Aboriginal person.

6. ‘Western Australian Ministry of Education’ and ‘Education Department’ are terms that refer to the same organisation. The Ministry of Education changed its name to Education Department in February 1994.

Abbreviations that have been frequently used in this dissertation include:

1. AEW: Aboriginal Education Worker.

2. ALO: Aboriginal Liaison Officer.

3. CDEP: Commonwealth Development Employment Program.

4. ATSIC: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

5. ASSPA: Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Program.

6. DCD: Department of Community Development.

7. PCAP: Priority Country Areas Program.

8. AESIP: Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program.


1.5 A brief introduction to the chapters of this dissertation

Chapter Two helps to establish the context of my study. It surveys the contribution that academic literature has to make to the theme of Aboriginal involvement and participation in formal schooling and community development. The chapter briefly reviews the history of suppression of Aboriginal people during the twentieth century by the dominant non-Aboriginal community. It also outlines the principles upon which the education system in Western Australia is attempting to address issues that have contributed to the failure of Aboriginal students in schools. Chapter Two particularly focusses on literature that promotes the concept of increasing parent participation in schooling as a way of reconceptualising schools as places that can help Aboriginal people achieve their aspirations. It also reviews the concepts of 'power' and 'change' and how they may influence the beliefs, practices and values of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals and groups. The final sections of Chapter Two include a review of literature on Aboriginal community development and an overview of research on the impact that change can have on participants in a change process.

Chapter Three describes and justifies the paradigm and methodology that was adopted to facilitate the investigation. It describes the philosophy that determined the parameters of the inquiry. The chapter also outlines the components of the research process, introduces the Yarnungu co-researchers, and discusses issues to do with protocol and ethics, especially in regard to working with Aboriginal people, some of whom did not understand English, and preserving confidentiality of information. The final section of the chapter introduces theories developed as a result of the investigation.

Chapter Four describes the findings of the investigation on the development of the school-
community partnership at Warakurna. It reviews the process of change that was undertaken in the school and wider community and analyses the impact that the changes had on the participants. A particularly important feature of this chapter is the examination of the role that conflict played during change and how the transformation in school governance caused widespread disruption in community operations.

Chapter Five continues the discussion on research findings with emphasis on the effect that changes to schooling in Warakurna had on the operations of schools in other communities in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

Chapter Six documents the substantive theory that emerged during the investigation and attempts to integrate the academic discussion in Chapter Two with the research findings in this investigation.

Chapter Seven concludes the dissertation by reviewing the objectives of the research, summarising the limitations that were apparent, drawing recommendations for various groups, and suggesting further avenues for research.
CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON ISSUES SIGNIFICANT TO THE NATURE OF ABORIGINAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOLING PROCESS
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2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the historical, social, political and economic context in which my research occurred. It aims at describing the environment that the Yarnangu had to encounter as they attempted to achieve their aspirations regarding achieving control over the school and other features of their community. The description particularly highlights a number of long-standing barriers that needed to be confronted by the Yarnangu if they were to achieve their objectives.

The themes for discussion in this chapter are categorised into the following sections:

1. An overview of the emergence of community participation in school governance in Australia.

2. Past non-Aboriginal attitudes and practices in the provision of schooling to Aboriginal people.

3. Recent policy changes to the structure and type of schooling that is provided to Aborigines in Western Australia, focussing particularly on community participation in school governance.

4. Recently stated aspirations of rural Aboriginal people regarding the nature and provision of formal schooling services to their communities and strategies for achieving them.

5. Responses to the prospect or actuality of changes in power relations between
Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals and groups and how such reactions may form barriers to prevent Aboriginal people from assuming greater control over schooling in their communities.

6. Processes involved in the development and operations of Aboriginal communities.

7. Summary of a theoretical framework suggested by the scholarly literature and any perceived gaps in research that this dissertation may redress.

2.1 An overview of the development of community participation in school governance in Australia

2.1.1 Introduction

Decentralisation and community participation in the governance of school systems at the district level are concepts that were born in the United States. Decentralisation of education to the local levels and governance by local education authorities is a concept that was developed in England and Wales (Gamage, 1993, p. 134).

Devolving the power and authority to provide education services to the school level and community participation in school governance has been emerging as a culture within Australian school systems since about the mid-1970s. In this discussion, I am defining 'community participation in school-based governance' as the formal alteration of governance structures to identify the school as the main decision-making unit. For the purposes of exercising the power and authority that comes from the devolution of responsibility to the local level, some formal structure, council or board exists so the school level participants can be directly involved in decisions that affect school development.

In this section, I will examine the emergence and development of the culture of decentralisation and community participation in Australia and its institutionalisation in several Australian state school systems since the mid-1970s.
2.1.2 A review of initiatives

For a period of over 150 years, all Australian state school systems were fully centralised, fairly rigid, bureaucracies. North American scholars such as Kendall (1938), Butts (1955), Turner (1960) and Jackson (1961) criticised the control, conformity, and preoccupation with efficiency and examinations which they discovered in Australia. They emphasised the importance of decentralisation and breaking down the bureaucracy on the grounds of administrative and economic advantages and effectiveness. It was not until the release of the Karmel Report (1973) and its support for the involvement of local communities in school governance, however, that states and territories began to seriously inquire into the nature of the partnership that the government-controlled schooling system had with the community.

*South Australia* ventured into community participation in school governance in 1972 when the Education Act was revised to allow for the establishment of school councils in state schools (1972, Pt. VIII). The subsequent Keeves Committee of Inquiry (1981) reviewed the operation of the councils and endorsed the movement towards transferring power to school communities. This included schools taking responsibility for financial budgeting and management.

*Victoria* endorsed the concept of community participation in schooling when it enacted the Victorian Education (School Councils) Act (1975). This led in 1976 to the creation of powerful school councils as mandatory, corporate bodies (1975, Div. III). Following the election of a Labor government in Victoria in 1982, community participation in schools received a further boost. The result of a ministerial review of the reform process concluded that there was a need to "devolve power and authority to the school based governing bodies consisting of representatives of the parents, staff, community, and in the case of secondary schools, students, with the principal as an ex-officio member" (Gamage, 1993, p. 138). Particular emphasis was placed on genuine devolution of authority and responsibility to the school community, collaborative decision-making, a responsive bureaucracy, the effectiveness of learning outcomes, and the active redress of disadvantage and discrimination (Fordham, 1985, 14).
In 1984, school councils were granted new powers such as the maintenance and improvement of school buildings, employment of ancillary staff, and management of the financial affairs of the school. Members of school councils were also accorded legal protection (Fordham, 1984, pp. 1-11). Further reforms recommended by the government in 1986 met with strong opposition from some interest groups but the direction towards school communities being heavily involved in decision-making processes appears to be set to continue.

The initiative to decentralise authority to the school level in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) commenced in 1967 following the Currie Report, An Independent Education Authority for ACT. The report recommended the establishment of a representative central body to oversee the schooling system and the formation of school boards at individual schools. Each board was to consist of parents, teachers, local community members and the principal as an ex-officio member (Currie, 1967). The Currie Report was supported by the Hughes Report (1973) which led to the formation of an Interim Schools Authority for the ACT in 1974 despite strong resistance from the New South Wales Teachers’ Federation. In 1976, mandatory corporate bodies were created (ACT Schools Authority Ordinance, 1976, Pt. VII) and schools currently determine their own educational policies in consultation with parents, teachers, students and the Ministry of Education.

In 1973, a consultative paper, The Community and Its Schools, was released in New South Wales in order to foster interest in decentralisation and community involvement in education. A review panel concluded that school advisory boards should be established on an optional basis. The proposals were rejected by the Teachers’ Federation, the Principals’ Association and parents and citizens groups. Revised ideas that were presented in 1975 were also rejected (Clinch, 1976, p. 14).

In 1983, the second initiative for community participation came as a result of meetings between the government and the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations (FOPACA), along with the Federation of School Community Organisations (FOSCO). A working group recommended that school management groups be established from 1986 but strong opposition from the Tea-
chers' Federation saw the recommendation shelved. A third initiative came at the time when the Liberal Party won government in 1988. The resulting interim *Schools Renewal Report* was released in June 1989 and recommended that principals should be encouraged to form school councils consisting of representatives of the teachers, parents and citizens groups, business and industry, and where appropriate, students (Scott, 1989, p. 29). The final report was issued in 1990 and made specific recommendations on the establishment of school councils. Although implementation of the recommendations was slow during 1990 and 1991, the rate at which they have been adopted has increased in recent years.

In *Western Australia*, a 1974 survey of schools by the Education Department concluded that there was no appetite for the establishment of governing bodies. The introduction of the *Education Amendment Act (1990)* and associated regulations, however, required that decision-making groups be established in all state schools unless an exemption was obtained. The groups were expected to participate in the formulation of school priorities and objectives but could not hold accounts, employ staff, provide amenities, or maintain and improve buildings. They were advisory groups only with the main responsibility being endorsing the annual school development plan.

Community participation in government-controlled schools in *Queensland* did not commence until 1987 when the report, *Meeting the Challenge*, was published. "The document emphasised the necessity to undertake a fundamental reappraisal of the way education was administered in the state" (Casey and McPherson, 1990, pp. 25-29). In 1989, a supplement to the Department of Education Gazette noted the importance of promoting education as a shared responsibility pointing out the benefits that could be derived if all stakeholders were encouraged to accept their part of the responsibility for education. The election of the Goss Labor Party government in 1989 saw a review of the schooling system recommend that community participation be increased. A movement towards self-management commenced and school advisory councils were established (Dempster, 1991, pp. 124-125).

In 1974, the *Tasmanian* Department of Education adopted a policy of permitting those schools
which desired to have community participation to experiment with school councils (Clinch, 1976, pp. 14-19). Following a 1980s review into community participation in schools, however, the Department of Education and Arts produced a document called, *The Management of Education in Tasmania: Roles and Responsibilities for the 1990s*. It stated that the development of self-management at the school level may include the option of a school council (Tasmanian Department of Education and the Arts, 1989, pp. 27-28). In August, 1990, the department sanctioned the formation of school councils and gave them powers over buildings and grounds development, staffing, finances, and monitoring school performance.

The 1983 amendment to the *Northern Territory Education Act* permitted the establishment of school councils on an optional basis. Councils had an advisory role in areas such as determining school policies, building and grounds development, control of the external use of school facilities, fund raising, and recommending the nature of the school staff (Northern Territory Department of Education, 1987, pp. 18-21). Councils are currently being encouraged to assume greater responsibility, flexibility and accountability by accepting block grants, participating in the selection of staff, controlling the school’s operational budget, and involvement in several areas of school management (Northern Territory Department of Education, 1987, pp. 21-22).

In concluding this brief review of the history and current state of community participation in government-controlled schools, research by Chapman and Boyd (1986, pp. 28-58) and a limited survey by Gamage (1990, p. 102) reveal that the community is generally positive about the philosophy of participating in school governance. They add, however, that some participants feel overburdened rather than empowered and more distressed than inspired. There are also suggestions that principals and teachers are frustrated by the increased demands on their time and energy because of the need to assume responsibilities outside their experience and expertise as well as dealing with role ambiguities and peer tensions (Gamage, 1993, p. 146). As a result of these concerns and the varying impact of the points of view of lobby groups like Parent and Citizen associations and teachers’ unions on schools, it is most likely that the success of the recent movement towards decentralising decision-making authority to the local community will vary from site to site.
Further, it is speculated that there have been periods during the devolution process that have caused individuals and groups to react in unique ways. There is, therefore, a need to investigate school governance at local sites to discover what factors influence the development of school councils. There is also a need to examine whether school-community governance operates as a symbolic response to political directives or whether it can function as a significant strategy that realises its stated goals and improves the performance of schools (Malen, Ogawa and Kranz, 1991, pp. 289-342).

2.2 Past non-Aboriginal attitudes and practices in the provision of schooling to Aboriginal students

The history of the interaction of Aboriginal people with the non-Aboriginal community has generally been one of oppression, inequity and cultural denigration (Rowley, 1971, p. 399; Stannage, 1981, p. 168; Morgan, 1986, p. 9; Crawford, 1989, p. 11; Eversley, 1990, pp. 34-37). The main official policies that have operated in Western Australia during the first seven decades of the twentieth century may broadly be described as Protectionism (1905-1948) and Assimilation (1948-1969). These policies were based upon the related beliefs that:

1. Aborigines exist on the lowest scale of human evolution and, once conquered, should be excluded from the general community by being confined to government-run reserves or Christian missions because they will eventually ‘die out’, a policy referred to as Protectionism (Welborn, 1978, p. 28; Eversley, 1990, p. 34; the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990, p. 2).

2. Aborigines should change their values and practices in order to live according to the same standards and beliefs as European-Australians because the Aboriginal culture restricts the capacity of Aborigines to be as successful as Europeans (Rowley, 1971, p. 399; Crawford, 1989, p. 11; Moore, 1993, pp. 57-59). This was the central tenet of the policy known as Assimilation.
The implementation of these policies was seen in the following phenomena:

1. Under Protectionism, Aboriginal children were largely excluded from school (Department of Native Affairs, 1937, p. 13; Rowley, 1970, p. 2). A myth was fostered by the dominant, largely European population, that Aboriginal people could not be educated to a level comparable to the rest of the population (Stanner, 1965, p. 213). Moreover, emerging psychological beliefs were premised on the basis that the model of a ‘successful person’ was white, Protestant and middle-class (Karier, 1973, p. 18; Eversley, 1990, p. 35), everything that Aboriginal people were not. Moore (1993, p. 59) claims that policies of Protection are examples of inter-class and colonial domination of non-Aboriginal people over Aboriginal people and the “oppressive structuring of material and aesthetic culture and of subjectivities which produced and reproduced racism”.

2. Christian missions and a few government-run institutions were left to provide a generally inferior schooling to Aboriginal children during the era of Protectionism, by standards that applied to non-Aboriginal students. (Mossenson, 1955, p. 40; Forrest, 1978, p. 40; Harris, 1987, p. 21; Eversley, 1990, p. 36). The provision of schooling by Christian missions was part of their humanitarian and evangelical role, but traditional Aboriginal culture found no place in educational philosophy because it was frequently seen as ‘the work of the devil’ (Morgan, 1986, p. 238; J. Harris, 1994, p. 555).

3. Learning programs during Protectionism emphasised domestic training for girls and labouring skills for boys. As part of the preparation of Aboriginal students to be institutionalised as a labouring class within the community, less time was allocated to teaching numeracy and literacy than was customary for European children (Forrest, 1978, pp. 145, 148 & 155).

4. As a result of official policies that prevented them from living according to traditional ways, many Aboriginal people found it difficult to embrace a tribal lifestyle. At the same time, however, they were not accepted into the European community because of their exclusion from the culture, structures and institutions that ensured the equitable distribution of resources
within the community. The resulting cultural dislocation served to entrench the disempowerment of Aboriginal people because of their limited exposure to the knowledge and skills that would give them the power to function effectively in their choice of community (Ball, 1990, p. 17) and the racist nature of the society that oppressed them (the Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1985, p. 8; Wilson, 1990, p. 30; Kringas and Stewart, 1992, p. 22; Moore, 1993, pp. 57-59).

5. When most Aboriginal children eventually gained access to Western schools with trained teachers and adequate resources, they generally experienced educational failure because the curriculum was derived from foreign European traditions (Gibson, 1959; Ieruluma, 1988, p. 63; Crawford, 1989, p. 11). Moreover, teacher expectations of the students were low because the home environment of the children was seen to be the main cause of educational failure (Western Australian Education Department file 533/47, 1951; Hyams and Bessant, 1972, p. 187). As a result, students were offered remedial instruction in the areas of literacy, hygiene, manual arts and moral and religious (Christian) education according to the claims of the cultural deficit theory that the home environment of Aboriginal students was inferior. The learning environment reinforced the academic failure of Aboriginal students and they responded with increasing “scepticism, truancy, unruly behaviour, apathy and failure” (Roper, 1969, p. 35). Academic failure and distrust of school was reproduced through the generations and a stereotype emerged that predicted educational failure for Aboriginal students (McInerney, 1989, p. 58; Malin, 1990, p. 28; Eversley, 1990, p. 39). Moreover, the involvement of Aboriginal parents in school processes was not seen to be of any value in overcoming the learning problems experienced by their children (McInerney, 1989, p. 61; Kringas and Stewart, 1992, p. 20).

6. As the value of qualifications became important in gaining employment during the period of Assimilation and beyond, a barrier was created that prevented most Aboriginal people from achieving promotionally oriented and personally satisfying employment (Fitzgerald, 1976, p. 191). Their lack of credentials also denied them membership of the elite stratum of highly educated, wealthy and powerful people that existed within Australian society (Fitzgerald, 1976, p. 190).
Aboriginal community members had little opportunity to be involved in decision-making on educational issues because proposals for action were framed in terms of 'the problems with Aboriginal students' rather than the 'problems encountered by Aboriginal students' (Stone, 1974, p. 197; Kringas and Stewart, 1992, p. 20; Smith, 1992, p. 34). That is, the culture practised by Aboriginal people was seen by the dominant European community (as represented by teachers) to be of little value in enhancing the schooling services that were offered to Aboriginal students because 'being Aboriginal' was seen to be the cause of the students' learning problems (McConnochie, 1982, p. 28).

From this brief review of the history of Aboriginal contact with the non-Aboriginal education process, it is reasonable to conclude that there is a legacy of Aboriginal alienation from the school system and general academic and managerial inferiority when compared with the non-Aboriginal community. The consequence of a long history of negative interaction has placed many Aboriginal people into a society that works to sustain the principles of disempowerment and inequality (Kringas and Stewart, 1992, pp. 20-33; Moore, 1993, pp. 57-59). The non-Aboriginal society promotes a number of community-derived caste-like pejorative labels and treatment that has seen Aboriginal people referred to as 'failure', 'truant', 'deficit', 'linguistically and cognitively deprived', 'racially inferior', 'remedial', and 'culturally impoverished' (Hyams and Bessant, 1972, p. 187; Fitzgerald, 1976, p. 191; Gilbert, 1977; McConnochie, 1982, pp. 17-30). The use of bureaucratic power by the non-Aboriginal community against Aboriginal people has served to perpetuate a particular set of values and procedures that has disadvantaged members of the Aboriginal community and has denied them the social, political, or economic resources to control their lives and achieve equality with non-Aboriginal people. Even academic knowledge that has represented and defined Aboriginal people and has promoted social discourse and ideology, has mainly come from non-Aboriginal sources and contexts (Muecke, 1992, pp. 33-35).

Because Aboriginal people have experienced a history of being excluded from school decision-making processes, it may be postulated that schools find it difficult to define their responsibilities in regard to respecting the culture and aspirations of Aboriginal people. It is also theorised
that Aboriginal participants within the schooling process may feel constrained by a dominant racist social ideology that derives from a European view of schooling. As a result, it may be further theorised that Aboriginal people often see the school as having little to offer their community and so doubt its relevance in helping them to achieve their aspirations. Pettman (1997, p. 90) certainly sees some merit in this theory when she notes the large number and scope of official regulations that are directed towards Aboriginal people. Another proposition that emerges from the historic discriminatory treatment of Aboriginal people, particularly in regard to schooling, is that any change that will enable them to participate in school-based decision-making processes will require concerted political activity and fundamental change in the way in which Aboriginal people are viewed. That is, non-Aboriginal people need to see Aboriginal people as a legitimate group, independent of contexts created by the non-Aboriginal culture. Moreover, they need to see Aboriginal people as having a right to move from the margins of the community and assume positions of authority (Jones, 1992, pp. 59-71).

A further point that is relevant to the development of theory is that research into the involvement and participation of Aboriginal people in schooling must be conducted against the background that much of the long-standing 'truth' about Aboriginal people has come from non-Aboriginal sources and has been based on a non-Aboriginal rationality. There is a need, therefore, for the Aboriginal 'voice' to express itself in research situations free from the constraints imposed on it by unequal power relations and historic beliefs about legitimacy and social structure.

2.3 Recent changes to the provision of government-controlled schooling to Aboriginal students in Western Australia

2.3.1 Introduction: The issues of equality and disadvantage

In section 2.2, a summary was provided on how policies of protection and assimilation were introduced following the conquering of Aboriginal people. The policies produced an involuntary caste-like class and forced its members to join the non-Aboriginal dominated community and to rely upon the promises of its extrafamilial institutions, promises that were rarely fulfilled (Cow-
lishaw, 1992, pp. 20-31). Aboriginal students, for example, were unable to embrace the values and practices that would guarantee their success at school and the education system was not prepared to provide access and equality in areas like curricula, pedagogy and resources (including personnel). It is argued here that fundamental change in the discriminatory social and institutional view of Aboriginal people is needed if the objective of state and territory education departments regarding genuine representative Aboriginal involvement in schools is to be achieved.

The need to deal with the issues of inequality and disadvantage in the schooling of minority groups like Aboriginal students was recognised by the Karmel Report (1973) when it claimed that “social achievement in Australia is closely linked to the pattern of social and economic inequalities in the broader society” (Karmel Report, 1973, p. 1). The report spoke of:

the right of every child, within practicable limits, to be prepared through schooling for full participation in society, both for his own and for society’s benefit. To this end it accepts the obligation to make special efforts to assist those whose pace of learning is slow (Karmel Report, 1973, p. 11).

Karmel’s call for improvement in the learning outcomes of Aboriginal students was closely associated with the need for positive discrimination that would lead to equality between all groups within the community. Johnston (1983, pp. 17-32) criticises the Karmel Report, however, on the grounds that it failed to define the concept of equality or how positive discrimination would lead to changes in the broader basis of social inequality. Johnston (1983, p. 26) is particularly concerned with how disadvantaged groups can acquire power over their circumstances and so overcome the barriers to achieving their aspirations and hopes. As suggested in section 2.2, culturally dominant classes always act to ensure that programs of reform do not challenge the existing political, social and economic structures that sustain the ideology of discrimination and racism against minority groups and so work to preserve the privileged positions of a particular group (Moore, 1993, p. 57; Aplet and Lingard, 1992, p. 68; Kringas and Stewart, 1992, pp. 20-35).

Another report that examined the issues of inequality and disadvantage in the provision of schooling services to Aboriginal people was the *Quality of Education in Australia* (Common-
wealth Schools Commission, 1985). This report concluded “that disadvantaged groups often have cultural backgrounds and orientations with which many schools are currently incapable of engaging” (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1985, p. 8). It went on to suggest that the provision of resources and access alone will not overcome the problems that many disadvantaged youth face because they have no power to control their lives. “Only a curriculum which recognises the real and learned lack of power of disadvantaged groups and which offers them power over decision-making, information, relationships and resources, can provide this point of attack” (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1985, p. 8). The Commission provided a clarity to the meaning of terms that was lacking in the Karmel Report (1973). For example, the term ‘equal outcomes’ was seen as referring to academic learning as well as the development of personal values and beliefs, the application of social skills and citizenship, and physical strength and agility.

Further to the exploration of inequality in the provision of schooling services to Aboriginal students, the Commonwealth Schools Commission (1987) produced In the National Interest: Secondary Education and Youth Policy in Australia. This report “emphasised the idea of distributing success more equally in schools, and not just seeking to impose social equality through schooling ...” (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1987, p. 30). The policy indicated the need to pursue equality in education and equality through education. The Commission linked the pursuit of equality with inclusiveness and cooperativeness. That is, it recommended that the background of students should be valued and that students should be able to participate in schooling in the same way as members of other groups.

Underlying the Commission’s reports was the theory that schools might be able to have some effect in dealing with entrenched social inequalities. This means, however, that education needs to have a vision of the sort of society in which we should live, one where difference is not a reason for discrimination. There was also the theory that Aboriginal communities should become involved in a variety of decision-making processes as genuine partners with the non-Aboriginal dominated school in order to make schooling more relevant to Aboriginal students and thereby improve learning standards.
The *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy* (1990, p. 7) has the ultimate goal of achieving "equity between Aboriginal people and other Australians in access, participation and outcomes in all forms of education by the turn of the century". In his analysis of the policy, Smith (1992, pp. 31-44) concludes that this objective can only be achieved if relationships between Aboriginal communities and schools are transformed (1992, p. 34). Smith (1992, p. 41) also claims that Aboriginal people need more knowledge about community systems and processes because equality in the school cannot be separated from equality throughout the community. Another area targeted by Smith (1992, p. 43) is that of pedagogy. "There is a case for a selective and concentrated attempt to unmask the hidden curriculum of Aboriginal and Islander schooling - an examination of teaching procedures which is the main way in which students are disempowered".

The claims by Smith (1992, pp. 31-44) support the proposition, stated earlier (see section 2.2) that, in order for Aboriginal people to be able to participate in a genuine decision-making partnership with the school, there must be a fundamental transformation in the general way which the Aboriginal community is viewed by the dominant non-Aboriginal society. That is, Aboriginal people must be able to assume more positions of power within the community and engage in a discussion with non-Aboriginal partners to promote the value of reason and merit when designing strategies to help communities to achieve their goals.

In summing up the value of the Karmel Report (1973), the Commonwealth Schools Commission (1985), the Commonwealth Schools Commission (1987) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education policy (1990) in addressing issues of inequality and disadvantage particularly for Aboriginal people, there appear to be four aspects to the definition of equality in regard to schooling opportunities for Aboriginal students:

1. The compensatory aspect where equality is defined in terms of producing optimum social mobility in a competitive, individualistic market society

2. A humanitarian feature where people are valued equally because of a common
humanity.

3. The mainstreaming element where a subculture of poverty requires resourcing to enable it to compete in mainstream schooling.

4. Situational power where the collective action of people will assist them to exercise power over their circumstances.

The value of the four aspects of equality that are implicit in the reports is that they can work to identify and then remove obstacles to achieving the aspirations of Aboriginal people and so enable them to achieve genuine decision-making power, a sense of belonging to their community, and personal power in being able to handle situations and find constructive answers to problems. It is theorised, therefore, that any process of fundamental change must involve the identification of barriers to change and then design of strategies by which those barriers can be overcome. It may further be theorised that the offer to Aboriginal people to take up certain positions of authority within schools will not be acted upon unless individuals also receive the decision-making power that is accorded to most of the non-Aboriginal community.

In the sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3, I will examine the current efforts made by the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments to address the issues of equality and disadvantage associated with the provision of schooling to Aboriginal students.

2.3.2 Commonwealth policy

Commonwealth policy on Aboriginal education is guided primarily by the *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (1994) as well as reports from committees on Aboriginal Education (the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985; the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, 1989, called NATIEP) and other affairs (the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990). The philosophy of the current federal government is built upon four
themes (Vanstone, 1996, p. 19):

1. Shifting to an outcomes focus, requiring all programmes to demonstrate their performance achievements to Indigenous communities and all Australian people (outcomes focus).

2. Highlighting the theme of Self-Empowerment through Economic Independence (employment priority).

3. Building programs and services that are inclusive of Indigenous peoples’ cultural needs and aspirations.

4. Linking Government initiatives so that maximum benefits are achieved (need for improved accountability).

"Underlying these themes is our commitment to achieving the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy" (1996, p. 19). The National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996-2002 (1995) is the Commonwealth’s (Ministers for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs called MCEETYA) policy response to the philosophical themes outlined above. The strategy facilitates the allocation of supplementary financial grants to the states and territories according to three main categories:

1. State and territory strategic plans that specify how the priorities of Aboriginal education will be addressed in order to qualify for Commonwealth funding. These plans aim to break the transgenerational cycle of Aboriginal academic failure (McConnachie, 1982, p. 18; McInerney, 1989, p. 58), integrate aspects of indigenous culture into learning as well as wider school processes, and increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal people (Harris, 1984; Christie, 1985; Wunungmurra, 1988, p. 69; the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, pp. 39-40; Ministry of Education, 1993, pp. 3-4).
2. The Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) scheme which is designed to encourage Aboriginal parents to support the school by deciding how an amount of money should be spent during the year. This systemic effort to give Aboriginal people the right to decision-making authority is consistent with calls that effective schooling can only be achieved when parents have a high degree of 'ownership' of school functions and when communication between the school and community is comprehensive (Yunupingu and Christie, 1987; Theis, 1987, p. 180; Valance, 1988; Kemmis, 1988, p. 138; Harris, 1988, 1990; Eversley, 1990, p. 39; Woods, 1991, p. 16).

3. The funding of research such as the establishment of a national database of curriculum and resource materials appropriate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and the design of training modules for teachers in schools with significant Aboriginal enrolments.

The current government maintains that the categories embody the belief that educational outcomes should be focussed on more than the inputs. “This change requires improved accountability arrangements ... [as well as] ... setting provider-specific targets and performance priorities” (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 1997-1999, 1997 p. 5).

2.3.3 Provision of schooling for Aboriginal people in Western Australia

Because of the history and present circumstances of the Aboriginal people within Australian society - and because Aboriginal student achievement is not yet comparable with that of other students - it is necessary that the Ministry of Education makes a special ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of Aboriginal students (Western Australian Ministry of Education, 1991, p. 5).

This statement expresses the current sentiments of the Western Australian Education Department in regard to the priority of improving the quality of Aboriginal education, particularly the inequality between Aboriginal learning outcomes and those that are achieved by non-Aboriginal students. The Education Department has responded to Commonwealth requirements and to pressure from lobby groups, like the Western Australian Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (WAAECG), which has expressed serious misgivings about the quality of schooling that is provided to Aboriginal students.
In Western Australia, Aboriginal schooling has been a priority since the Karmel Report (1973) documented the link between educational failure and social and economic disadvantage (Karmel Report, 1973, p. 1). As a subsection of the Social Justice policy (1991), Aboriginal Education Strategic Plans (1990-1992 & 1993-1995) aimed to ensure “that Aboriginal students are provided with equitable educational achievements and to realise their potential within the wider Australian society” (Ministry of Education, 1991, p. 5). Developed in consultation with the WAAECG and the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), the plans attempted to map a way of addressing the issues of:

1. The geographic isolation of many Aboriginal students (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 3).

2. The need to attract and retain highly qualified teachers in small, geographically remote communities (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1994, p. 10).


4. The need for schools to develop strategies to take advantage of available system-wide funds, support agencies and resources (1993, p. 57) as well as “widening the involvement of Aboriginal people in education decision-making” (1993, p. 4).

5. Curriculum development that emphasises the value of Aboriginal history, culture and learning strengths and promotes the status of Aboriginal studies within the curriculum. Curriculum initiatives also include teaching Western knowledge to Aboriginal students that is deemed to be appropriate in the view of Aboriginal communities (1993, p. 53).

6. Providing programs to Aboriginal students who have been identified as being at risk of not completing at least Year 10 formal schooling or of not being able to achieve success in the early years of schooling (Aboriginal Education Operational Plan 1993-1995, p. 67).
7. The welfare of students, particularly in the area of health (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1994, p. 11).

These issues have caused the Ministry of Education (1993) to address Aboriginal schooling through the following goals:

1. **Improving educational outcomes for all Aboriginal students.** In line with other states and territories (Australian Education Council, 1992, pp. 23, 62 & 146), the Western Australian Education Department has moved to help break the cycle of schooling failure that has long been associated with the schooling experiences of many Aboriginal students (McInerney, 1989, p. 58; Malin, 1989; Singh, 1990; Western Australian Ministry of Education, 1993; Lee, 1993, p. 24). Initiatives are in place, for example, to help Aboriginal students to acquire skills in literacy, especially standard English, while also promoting the role of vernacular. This is because it is recognised that language is a vehicle for ideology and ideology represents power and a way to achieve personal control (Kemmis, 1988, p. 131; Christie, 1989, p. 31; Harris, 1990, p. 90; Phillips, 1992, p. 26; the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 1992, p. 66; Lee, 1993, p. 29; Gledhill, 1994, p. 31). Moreover, programs in other subjects and the use of alternative delivery methods have been constructed to include the culture of Aboriginal students as a way of addressing their learning needs (Harris, 1990, p. 21; Richards, 1990, p. 14; Aboriginal Independent Schools, 1992; Ministry Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1993, p. 114).

Examples of the way in which the Education Department has addressed the literacy and numeracy needs of Aboriginal students from pre-primary to Year 10 are through the introduction of the Critical Steps, ELAN (English Literacy and Numeracy) and Stepping Out programs (Ministry Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1993, p. 115).

2. **Increased involvement and participation of Aboriginal people in school decision-making processes.** The lines of communication between the school and Aboriginal parents must be open to encourage a closer symmetry and responsiveness between the views of parents and

Schools should therefore attempt to implement strategies that present an image that is free from cultural bias and involve the Aboriginal community in various roles. In line with other states and territories (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1993, pp. 43 & 92), the Western Australian Education Department has tried to achieve greater involvement in schools by Aboriginal people through the employment of Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs) and Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALOs). There is also an emphasis on the value of school-based ASSPA committees which encourage parents to contribute to school planning (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1993, p. 114).

It is worth noting that the level of involvement of Aboriginal people prescribed by the Education Department does not appear to be as great as that recommended by a number of researchers. For example, as a result of investigating Navajo schooling services, Cummins (1988, p. 310), suggests that “education [must become] a truly community enterprise involving an equal partnership between educators in the school and educators at home (i.e. parents)” McLaughlin (1989, p. 286) and Soldier (1992, p. 146) also stress the need for schooling to function in a way that is consistent with the cultural and linguistic background of Navajo students and believe that this can be best achieved through community governance over school operations.

The aspirations expressed by Cummins, Soldier and McLaughlin in regard to the role of Navajo communities in governing local schools, and by Jordan (1985), Poulson (1988), McClay (1988), Singh (1990) and Smith (1992, p. 41) in the context of bringing equality in power rela-
tions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups can only be truly realised by Aboriginal people training to become teachers. Moreover, to ensure that Aboriginal teachers are able to fully participate in schools, the sort of training that is offered to them should be of the same quality as that provided to those who aim to teach in the wider community (the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, p. 177; Harris, 1990, p. 154; Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1993, p. 43).

In 1996, there were only 40 Aboriginal teachers in Western Australian government schools. The existence of well-meaning policies regarding increasing the role of the community in school affairs, therefore, does not necessarily mean that they will be implemented according to word or intent at the school level. There are few Aboriginal people who hold authoritative positions within the non-Aboriginal dominated system and who can help to promote the policy of Aboriginal involvement (the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990, pp. 6 & 8-11).

3. Restructuring school environments to respect Aboriginal culture and learning styles particularly through the use of appropriate teaching and curriculum practices. Because many Aboriginal children come from an environment that is quite different than that reflected by the formal school environment (Christie, 1985, pp. 9-12; Malin, 1989, p. 51; Harris, 1990, p. 23), schools must build upon the language and background of students if they wish to foster the self-esteem upon which success in learning is premised (the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, pp. 39-40; Kemmis, 1988, p. 131; Christie, 1990, pp. 2-3; Brown, 1990).

The Western Australian Education Department completed the Aboriginal Studies syllabus for release in 1997. The aims of the syllabus, which are similar to those that operate in other states and territories (Australian Education Council, 1990), presents Aboriginal cultural perspectives, both historic and current, throughout the general curriculum as well as from within a discrete learning program. An Aboriginal Languages curriculum is also being developed and currently (1997) operates in nine schools. Both programs have resulted in "improvements in self-images
of Aboriginal students and a better understanding of Aboriginal history and culture among non-Aboriginal students and their parents" (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1993, p. 114).

The positive assessment of the effects of the introduction of curricula in Aboriginal culture, history and vernacular is consistent with comments by Yunupingu and Christie (1987) in their review of the reconceptualising of the nature of schooling at Yirrkala. Supporting statements have also been made by the Yipirinya School Council (1989) concerning the role of the school in maintaining the cultural integrity of Aboriginal people. From a wider context, Cummins (1988, pp. 307-315), McLaughlin (1989, p. 286), Holm and Holm (1990), and Soldier (1992, pp. 145-148) emphasise the value of including the Navajo language and culture in the curriculum.

The provision of professional development for non-Aboriginal teachers aims at encouraging a team approach to the teaching process by involving non-Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal people in a two-way learning exchange (Yunupingu, 1988; Valance and Valance, 1988; Harris, 1990, p. 126; Willmott, 1991, p. 42). Similarly, teachers are encouraged to investigate ways in which they can monitor the presence of cultural bias within the school and particularly through their own behaviour (Christie, 1985, p. 71). The role of the non-Aboriginal teacher in Aboriginal schooling will be further highlighted in the next part of this section.

4. **The provision of teachers in 'remote' schools.** In recognition of the need to have a stable and experienced teaching staff to assist in maximising student learning outcomes, the Western Australian Education Department is endeavouring to create personal and professional circumstances so that teachers will serve in 'remote' Aboriginal schools for long periods (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 4). From programs designed to assist with initial induction to financial and professional development incentives while serving in remote areas, the Ministry is attempting to improve the professional competence, sensitivity and commitment of teachers to Aboriginal education.
The teacher is a significant person in determining the success of the schooling of Aboriginal students (Dwyer, 1979; McGarvie, 1984, p. 5; Jordan, 1989, Harris, 1990, p. 118; p. 2; Lee, 1994, p. 24). Because most of them are non-Aboriginal people, it is vital that they attempt to understand the students' culture and family life and take steps to reflect it in positive classroom practice (Christie, 1985, p. 69; Lee, 1993, p. 30). The vital role of Aboriginal people working in collegial association with the non-Aboriginal teacher needs to be appreciated when designing the staffing of Aboriginal schools. This is because the processes that occur within Aboriginal communities can only fully be understood by Aboriginal people themselves and they alone can provide a positive direction for the increasing role of Aboriginal people in the school (Harris, 1988 & 1990; Kemmis, 1988, p. 138; McClay, 1988, p. 213; Jordan, 1988).

5. The impact of the devolution process on schools with a significant Aboriginal enrolment. The Better Schools report (1987) heralded the devolution of responsibility for school operations from the central to the local level. The concept of the self-determining government school began to evolve, and 'remote' schools were given the opportunity to control the areas of: (a) flexibility in structures and processes in order to be able to effectively respond to change; (b) responsiveness to the needs of all participants in the schooling process particularly within the local community; (c) accountability to participants within the schooling process; and (d) the capacity for planning, self-evaluation and resource deployment (Gamage, 1993, p. 144; Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 67).

Unfortunately, the devolution process seems to have stalled in 'remote' schools (including the Ngaanyatjarra Lands) to some extent. In its annual report (1993) the Western Australian Ministry of Education stated that small, remote schools had "experienced difficulties in creating formal decision-making groups" (1993, p. 69). As a result, most have been granted at least a two year exemption from setting up the groups.

In reviewing current objectives and plans that are designed to address inequality in the provision of schooling to Aboriginal people, there is evidence that the four aspects of equality described in section 2.3.1 are being addressed to varying extents. A fundamental weakness in the programs,
however, is that they are generally designed by non-Aboriginal public servants albeit following some consultation with Aboriginal people (Woods, 1991, p. 17). The plans are then implemented and evaluated by non-Aboriginal teachers using non-Aboriginal designed assessment tools.

The involvement of the Aboriginal community in the process is limited because there are few Aboriginal people who hold the institutionally recognised positions of power as teachers and public servants. Moreover, the structure of community participation in school decision-making is not committed towards involving parents as full partners but restricts them to simply assisting in the development of broad directions and priorities (McInerney, 1989, p. 61; Dixon, 1992, p. 16). The dominance of non-Aboriginal structures and institutions (as may be seen in monocultural schools and the importance of the teacher's ideology in the classroom) is never challenged because programs that implement the objectives of governments do not address the issue of the distribution of power over circumstances (Dawson, 1989, p. 12). That is, the strategies designed to implement strategic plans do not affect the inequality that exists in the schooling of Aboriginal students.

Foster and Harman (1992, pp. 236-237) believe that cultural reproduction in Australia rests on the continuation of a particular dominant ideology. The components of this ideology include:

1. The ideology of reason and a particular interpretation of rationality.

2. Science as ideology, glorification of the scientific method.

3. The ideology of equality and the maintenance of individual rights through European-designed legislation.

4. Culture as ideology where cultural differentiation is an expression of structural inequality and where education aims at reproducing differences between the culture of the upper class and the subordinate classes.
5. The ideology of the family where the family is seen as an isolated and privatised institution and as an agent of cultural transmission. The family promotes individualism, competition, and conformity to the capitalist system of production.

Along with Owens (1981), Foster and Harman (1989, p. 237) and Saha and Keeves (1990) claim that the ideology of the state supports dominant interests over subordinate groups and establishes economic and social relations in such a way as to exploit, frustrate and oppress groups that have beliefs and values not consistent with those expressed by the dominant ideology. Therefore, initiatives that derive from non-Aboriginal education planners are likely to be consistent with the underlying ideology that preserves the current racist and bigoted structure of society and so do very little to address the issue of inequality (Pine and Hilliard, 1990, p. 594).

As Eversley (1990, p. 39) states:

Aboriginal children have theoretically had equal access to education at all levels since the 1950s. This has not meant, however, that Aboriginal children have achieved in the schooling system in the same manner as other Australian children. Standards are low, access is limited, retention rates are low, and the curriculum is inappropriate to their needs.

Only fundamental, risky change is likely to address the inequality experienced by Aboriginal students because it must challenge the ideology of a society that has enshrined the dominance of the largely non-Aboriginal classes over minority groups. This change is political because of its transforming nature in recognising, representing, renaming and reinterpreting experiences (Berthoff, 1990, p. 362). McTaggart (1990, p. 9) further describes the transformation process as "providing a social setting where people can work together, dream together of a better community, and try to translate their dreams into the language of action and evaluation". A fundamental shift in decision-making power means a restructuring in all areas of schooling. These areas of change include, the formal relationships between participants, the definition and prioritising of knowledge and components of learning, theories of teaching-learning pedagogy, relationships between the school and the community, and what it means to be an 'educated person'. Dawson (1989, p. 15) states that the transformation process may lead to conflict as individuals form quasi groups to exert pressure on those who promote the dominant ideology in particular
situations.

Zoltin (1993, p. 45) and Fullan (1993, pp. 12-17) apply the nature of transformation to the North American situation and state that equality of minority groups will be achieved only if a critical core of leaders with clear goals and principles design policy rather than submit to its implementation. The leaders must also be able to share their beliefs and visions with the community at large and so encourage movement as a whole towards a preferred future.

A number of propositions arise from this discussion. Firstly, it would be reasonable to assume that there is frequently a gulf between officially stated objectives and their application in programs. As a result, policies and strategies do not realistically address issues of inequality and power and there is a tacit recognition that schooling should be viewed from a non-Aboriginal context. Secondly, there is not the depth of official commitment to the genuine involvement of Aboriginal people in ‘remote’ schools as there is for non-Aboriginal people in other schools. The operation of a discriminatory ideology that allows for exemptions to be given to schools setting up school decision-making groups appears to have rationalised that Aboriginal people are incapable or unwilling to assume positions of school governance. It may be surmised, therefore, that non-Aboriginal decision-makers are not sincerely committed to encouraging transformation within the school system.

It is a reasonable conclusion to this discussion that Aboriginal schooling is a theoretical priority of the Western Australian Education Department as part of its commitment to social justice because ‘Aboriginal access and achievement remain matters for concern’ (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 58). The sincerity with which individual schools have been prepared to embrace features of the priority, however, is difficult to fully determine.

2.4 Achieving Aboriginal aspirations in rural schooling

In this section, I will review the goals that Aboriginal people have recently expressed in regard to the development of their communities, the barriers that exist to achieving those goals, and the
place that schooling may have in promoting Aboriginal aspirations. I will also examine the contribution that academic literature has to make to the type of curriculum and decision-making structures that should exist in schools to help achieve the aspirations of Aboriginal people. In a sense I am going to review the manner in which schooling might occur if Aboriginal people had the power to make the key decisions and establish the structures they think would help satisfy their aspirations.

2.4.1 Aspirations of Aboriginal people and ways of overcoming the barriers to them being achieved

There is growing evidence to support the claim that Aboriginal people have strong ideas on the directions that their communities should take in the future (Eversley, 1990, p. 39; Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1994, pp. 47-48). For example, McClay (1988, pp. 275-276) categorises the goals of the Warlpiri as 'materialistic', such as the need for more vehicles, alcohol, better housing and sporting facilities and 'non-materialistic', which includes the desire to preserve the vernacular, maintain the family, improve communications and uphold traditional Law and ceremonies.

Theis (1987) also found in her survey in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia that Aboriginal people have a clear perception of the issues involved in schooling in their area. Her research highlighted four priorities for improving the effectiveness of Aboriginal schooling:

1. Teaching and informing Europeans about the nature of Aboriginal people in the region.

2. Improving the levels of proficiency in standard Australian English attained by Aboriginal students while also acknowledging and providing for diverse language and cultural backgrounds.

3. Provision of on-site training to adults, including teacher training.
4. Teaching in the area of recreation and leisure.

Eversley (1990, p. 39) states that the objectives of Aboriginal people centre upon their desire to have more control over the services provided to their children. The people want to see the provision of schooling as part of the development of the entire community particularly in its ability to promote self-management and cultural identity.

Other researchers who have detailed some of the educational aspirations of particular groups of Aboriginal people include Lanhupuy (1987), Poulson (1988), Wunungmurra (1988), Yunupingu (1988), Yunupingu and Christie (1990), and Bunbury, Hastings, Henry and McTaggart (1991). The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education policy (1989) and the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (1994, pp. 47-48) has recorded the long-term goals of Aboriginal people in terms of their involvement in decision-making, equality of access to services, equity of educational participation and equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.

In conclusion to his analysis of the aspirations of the Warlpiri people at Lajamanu, Northern Territory, McClay (1988, pp. 274, 291-292) states that Aboriginal people often find it difficult to have their goals implemented. In a similar commentary, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990, pp. 51-54) reports that, “it is doubtful if anyone knows what communities really want because the process of consultation is so poor”. The Committee and others have identified the following barriers to effective communication and consultation:


2. The control by non-Aboriginal bureaucracies over the process of communication and decision-making (Dawson, 1989, p. 11; Yunupingu and Christie, 1990, p. 1). Bureaucratic
rationality, by appearing to be neutral and objective, concerned only with the question of means and not ends, has the consequence of making subordinates submit their will and surrender their power to their administrative superiors (Aplet and Lingard, 1992, p. 68). Bureaucracies, in fact, are not neutral or objective. They actively work to maintain their own position which promotes inequality and perpetuates social reproduction (Woods, 1991, p. 17).

3. A lack of understanding by Aboriginal people of the nature of decisions that are reached because of flaws in the process of communication (Jackson and Cooper, 1991, p. 31).

4. Lack of training and awareness by Aboriginal people that enables them to fully participate in decision-making.

5. An unwillingness by certain non-Aboriginal individuals and groups to practice appropriate protocol when interacting with Aboriginal people.


7. The effect of statements made by non-Aboriginal groups that serve to reinforce myths about Aboriginal people (Singh, 1990, p. 11).

In order to overcome the barriers to effective communication and consultation, McClay (1988, p. 271) suggests that Europeans inquire into “the nature of the Aboriginal sociocultural environment” and thereby attempt to understand “what, to Aboriginal people are genuine constraints, for example, social obligations, but which to the white person are less important issues to be pushed aside in pursuit of the goal”. He goes on to state that the history of Aboriginal-European contact has greatly inhibited the capacity of Aborigines to realise their aspirations (1988, pp. 275-276; also Johnston, 1983, p. 26) and that, even under the current government policy of
‘self-management’, the ability of Aborigines to reach their goals is still limited (see also Gilbert, 1977; McConnachie, 1982; Budby, 1984, p. 207; Altman, 1985, pp. 13-15; Harris, 1988; Christie, 1988, p. 69; Folds, 1989; Bindarriy, Yangarriny, Mingalpa and Warlunji, 1991, p. 164).

Unless there is a cooperative understanding and sharing between the non-Aboriginal service providers and the Aboriginal recipients, “the aims of any training and educational programmes may well not be in harmony with Aboriginal aspirations” (Theis, 1988, p. 286; McInerney, 1989, p. 61). That is, the ideals of Aboriginal people may not be realised if the decision-making process is largely controlled by non-Aboriginal-dominated bureaucracies. As a consequence, Aboriginal communities may not feel able to support school programs (the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, p. 79; Yunupingu, 1988). Rather, they may respond to school initiatives with discomfort, hostility, ambivalence, or fear (House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, p. 75; Singh, 1990, pp 13-14) An example of the way in which Aboriginal aspirations have not been achieved due to them being manipulated by non-Aboriginal decision-makers may be seen in the 1989 proposal to set up a teacher education program in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Community members in the Lands expressed the need for local Yarnangu to be trained as teachers according to a negotiated framework (McGinty, 1989). Despite formally documenting this desire along with a specific plan of action, teacher training never commenced for reasons unknown to the Yarnangu. The people were unable to influence non-Aboriginal decision-makers on this matter and so did not achieve their aspirations.

As was mentioned in section 2.3.2, it appears that in order to help achieve Aboriginal aspirations, schooling must proceed from the basis of Aboriginal authority in decision-making (McClay, 1988, p. 276; McTaggart, 1988, pp. 21-25; Reaburn, 1989, p. 3; Harris, 1990, pp. 19, 80, 85 & 116; Willmett, 1991, pp. 1 & 44; Gamage, 1993, p. 144). Graham (1986, p. 94) provides an example of a way of working towards this when she calls for a team teaching approach where Aboriginal aides and non-Aboriginal teachers plan and teach together in a bicultural setting but under the authority of the Aboriginal community. Similarly, McClay (1988, p.
suggests that non-Aboriginal educators “work with Aboriginal people on identifying the components of the aspiration(s) so that they can make their own evaluation of its feasibility”, assist in overcoming constraints and work with a long-term non-judgmental view of how they can help to achieve those aspirations. Harker and McConnochie (1985) add that two important priorities in the eyes of many Aboriginal people are their need to have the key role in decision-making in school affairs (the opportunity to play an appropriate negotiating role in political processes and curriculum) and to promote the importance of Aboriginal language (oral and written) in the school. They argue that Aboriginal people from many regions have two clear desires: “a desire for local control of their schools and language programmes, and a desire for a focus on language maintenance programmes in Aboriginal languages” (1985, p. 5). Poulson (1988, p. 69) states that Aboriginal people must control the schooling process and suggests that the job of teaching Western knowledge should be in the hands of Aboriginal teachers. Aboriginal teachers “understand ... how our children learn” and can ensure that there is a school curriculum that takes advantage of the learning strengths of the children and allows them to work towards achieving community aspirations.

The concept being described by Harker and McConnochie (1985), Poulson (1988) and McClay (1988) is often referred to as two way schooling. There are many different models of two way schooling but they all have in common the philosophy that the Aboriginal community must hold the authority over school decision-making and that schools must employ Aboriginal staff.

Smith (1992, pp. 38-42) introduces one conception of two way schooling by suggesting that it is the right of all people to determine their own destinies by conveying an appropriate consciousness of the world through schooling. He believes that Aboriginal people must have the opportunity to learn according to two domains of experience under the authority of Aboriginal decision-makers. Not to separate the Aboriginal from the Western domain of learning and knowledge is to risk maintaining an aspect of the significant power imbalance that has historically existed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups.

The first domain of experience is that which derives from the Aboriginal culture and the second
domain is that which centres on Western traditions that are seen by Aboriginal people to be useful for achieving their objectives. In endorsing a philosophy of domain separation as a strategy to achieve the curriculum objectives of two way schooling, Harris (1990, p. 6) states that, on the one hand, Aboriginal people must obtain knowledge "that makes up the context of culture and context of situation that allows for English to be understood properly and used appropriately in a wide enough range of typical Western cultural situations". He also states, however, that there is a domain that must reinforce and value the traditional culture of the Aboriginal community and preserve it against absorption into the non-Aboriginal culture (1990, pp. 1, 5, 17-19 & 116). That is, students must "be exposed to those people who are the richest carriers of Aboriginal language, stories, songs and philosophy of living; those who know the land best and who have recognised Aboriginal skills of many kinds" (1990, p. 126).

A negotiated curriculum where the decisions are made as to the knowledge that should be taught in the school from Western and Aboriginal domains under Aboriginal authority is endorsed by Wunungmurra (1988). He refers to the need to look for common ground in the knowledge of the Yolngu culture and the Western tradition so that "... teachers and students learn with each other about the way in which both sides can come together" (Wunungmurra, 1988, p. 71). That is, while he accepts the often profound differences that exist between Aboriginal and Western worlds, he sees a need to exchange knowledge from each domain in order to make student learning relevant and to strengthen the viability of each domain.

Within the context of domain separation as a strategy to implement two way schooling, Poulson (1986) believes that the school should be the institution that teaches Western knowledge and skills and that the family is where traditional knowledge should be taught. He argues that even if Aboriginal people control the operations of the school, "... then parents will support the school and many of those parents will want a school which teaches Western knowledge strongly" (1986, p. 69). He goes on to state that, "school should teach English and the job of looking after Aboriginal culture is best left to Aboriginal families" (1986, p. 69). That is, he wants to see curricula, pedagogical and physical boundaries established between the domains of knowledge in order to achieve a two way approach to schooling.
There are a number of authors who have expressed some misgivings with the domain concept that I have described. Oller (1976, p. 69), Sayers (1982) and McConvell (1984, p. 51) believe, for example, that domain separation implies that one language or one way of looking at a topic is more suitable for use in formal contexts than another. McConvell (1984, p. 51) states in regard to the domain of language separation:

To maintain the vernacular it is not enough to build a wall against English and put the vernacular inside a 'reserve'. The vernacular could grow in the hands of Aboriginal people themselves, to challenge the domination of English not in everything, but in situations the people themselves feel capable.

Black (1990, p. 26) endorses the views of McConvell (1984) and claims that the compartmentalising of Aboriginal knowledge (including vernacular) could lead to the demise of traditional culture by limiting its significance and application and thereby inadvertently trivialising it.

Bilingual schooling is another strategy that is used by some Aboriginal communities to help achieve some of the objectives of two way schooling. Yunupingu and Christie (1987 & 1990) claim that some models of bilingual schooling can provide Aboriginal people with power inside the classroom but add that decision-making processes that are carried out primarily in vernacular, with the support of English, can provide people with power within the school generally. Bilingual programs in themselves will not create effective Aboriginal schools but, along with a general shift in the language that dominates the school, decision-making power can move from non-Aboriginal to Aboriginal control and so enable a two way approach to schooling to be achieved (the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, p. 110; Yunupingu and Christie, 1987, p. 2; the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990, p. xviii; Phillips, 1992, p. 26).

An important problem with the desire by some Aboriginal communities to control the decision-making functions of local schools and to conduct schooling according to a two way approach, is that most schools (at least those that are government-controlled) are controlled by non-Aboriginal teachers who support a particular Western-derived ideology and this will be the case at least in the medium term (House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Educa-
tion, 1985, p.190; Harris, 1990, p. 154). This should not mean, however, that the Aboriginal community cannot achieve and make good use of decision-making power in the school in the short term, but it must be appreciated that few Aboriginal people currently possess the sort of institutional authority that comes from being a formally qualified teacher (Smith, 1997, p. 35).

There is a need, therefore, for Aboriginal communities to engage with non-Aboriginal staff in a dual process of moving towards a desired form of schooling. One strand of the process can commence in the short term and allows for the well-considered opinions of the community to be implemented within the institutionalised decision-making structures of the school and governed by Aboriginal people (the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, p. 8; Theis, 1987, p. 180; Kemmis, 1988, p. 138; Yunupingu, 1988, pp. 5-6; Harris, 1990, p. 12; Willmett, 1991, pp. 40-41). This is initially largely a political process in that power is redistributed between groups and ideologies that govern attitudes and beliefs are revised. It will involve changing the school philosophy and practice in order for Aboriginal people to take their place on decision-making groups and for non-Aboriginal staff to see their role as shifting from being dominant in the cultural, political and operational aspects of the school to one of facilitating the concepts of development that are requested by the community (Harris, 1990, p. 18).

The second strand must be viewed from a longer term perspective and sees Aboriginal people undergoing teacher training and acting as role models within the classroom. They are then able to claim the institutional authority that comes with their position particularly to the extent that Aboriginal teachers need to contribute to the design of a theory of teaching that will maximise the effectiveness of student learning (the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, pp. 14-15; Watson, 1985, p. 16; Lanhupuy, 1988, p. 3; Reaburn, 1989, p. 3; Harris, 1990, pp. 126, 128 & 154; Reid, 1992, p. 8).

As a general statement, when school governance is located in the hands of Aboriginal people (teachers and community representatives) who work in association with suitable non-Aboriginal staff, it will be possible to increasingly make the process of schooling relevant to the back-
ground of students and so produce graduates who are able to contribute to the achievement of community aspirations (Christie, 1985, p.13; Kemmis, 1988, p. 138; McClay, 1988, p. 213; Jordan, 1989, p. 2; Harris, 1990, pp. 18, 118 & 154; Singh, 1990, p. 11; Nirrpuranydji, 1991, p. 97). That is, schooling will become a two-way interchange of knowledge and experiences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures (Yunupingu, 1988, p. 4). There will also be an appropriate decision-making structure where “parents of Aboriginal ... children have primary responsibility for the education of their children and should provide support for their children beyond the school” (National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1992, p. 27). The essence of the two-way structure of schooling is that the roles carried out by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants must enhance the value of Aboriginal knowledge, skills and beliefs within the curricula and provide a cultural context with which to examine and demystify the Western world. It aims at producing bicultural people who are comfortable within their Aboriginal culture but are able to embrace the features of Western culture that can enable them to achieve particular objectives.

To sum up this section, seven related propositions can be linked to construct a theoretical framework that is pertinent to this investigation:

1. Many Aboriginal people have well-considered aspirations for the education of their children despite ethnocentric, bureaucratic and linguistic practices that deny them the realisation of those hopes.

2. In order for formal schooling to have relevance to Aboriginal people, it must become more culturally symmetrical with the students’ background (including language), particularly with the appointment of Aboriginal teachers, in order to optimise student learning, self esteem, and the achievement of community aspirations.

3. Any improvement in the relationship between the home and the school involves a shift in the political culture of the school. That is, there must be a shift in the distribution of power between participants in the decision-making processes of the school, away from the his-
toric authority of dominant non-Aboriginal groups and towards a situation where legitimate Aboriginal representatives work in partnership with non-Aboriginal employees under Aboriginal authority.

4. Any shift in the distribution of power between non-Aboriginal teachers and the Aboriginal community would require a significant restructuring in all areas of school operations and decision-making.

5. The concept of domain separation would enable the introduction of curricula that respects the viability of the Aboriginal culture through the incorporation of certain knowledge and skills from the Aboriginal domain that are seen by the community as helpful in achieving its objectives.

6. To satisfy the objective of domain separation requires that Aboriginal people have authority over school decision-making because only appropriate members of the Aboriginal community can decide the sort of policies and programs that schools should follow in order to be consistent with community-derived parameters.

7. Members of the non-Aboriginal community are reluctant to allow fundamental change from occurring and work to preserve their positions of power.

Thus far in the literature review, I have focussed primarily upon the relationship of Aboriginal people with the school system. In the next section, I will broaden the discussion by exploring the general development of Aboriginal communities. I will particularly emphasise the criteria that should be satisfied in order for Aboriginal development to proceed according to an autonomous model; that is, where Aboriginal people have full control over service delivery to their communities.

2.5 Processes involved in the planning and development of Aboriginal communities
The school cannot be viewed in isolation. Its goals and aspirations should be linked to those of the larger community. Consequently, an autonomous Aboriginal community is best able to support and maintain long-term local governance of the school. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to review academic literature on the general development of Aboriginal communities. I will focus the discussion on highlighting the criteria that must be satisfied in order for community development to occur.

I have chosen to use Wolfe's four models (1994, pp. 6-7) to open this review of interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups:

1. Assimilation where governments and other external agents exercise full responsibility and control over decision-making and service delivery.

2. Integration where community advisory committees are established but control is still exercised from outside the community.

3. Delegation which occurs when governments hand over some responsibilities to communities and involve local Aboriginal people in some decision-making. Control, however, still rests with mainly external non-Aboriginal agents.

4. Autonomy which is the situation where an Aboriginal community has full control over community development issues at all stages.

Cowlishaw (1988) states that most models of interaction have been historically located within the assimilationist and integrationist models. Problems and issues have been defined in non-Aboriginal terms and fault has been laid at the feet of Aboriginal people (1988, pp. 220 & 230). The dominant non-Aboriginal ideology has been viewed as legitimate and a number of myths regarding the capacity of Aboriginal people to make their own decisions and take control of their communities have flourished (1988, p. 221). Individuals and groups who have suggested that
other models may be more appropriate in helping Aboriginal people to achieve their aspirations have experienced considerable opposition and suffered significant repercussions (1988, p. 217 & 222). Therefore, when Lea and Wolfe (1993) and Wolfe (1994) suggest that the autonomous model is only one which will enable Aboriginal communities to become empowered, independent and sustainable, they are raising the likelihood that there will be conflict between individuals and groups during the process of trying to achieve change.

Lea and Wolfe (1993) and Wolfe (1994) believe that it will only be through the implementation of autonomous models that development programs will be successful. They particularly emphasise the need for Aboriginal people to be able to integrate Western and traditional values and priorities so that they can formulate definitions of key terms such as, "development" and "community". They further suggest that non-Aboriginal groups must surrender their historic agenda and ideology and so remove the informal pressures that have maintained the dominance of non-Aboriginal classes over Aboriginal people. They state that "Community development is a process whereby a community empowers itself to initiate and sustain its own betterment" (Lea & Wolfe, 1993, p. 2). Empowerment is referred to as the result of "... change or transformation that makes life better in ways that people want" (1993, p. 6). Within this context, community development occurs "on their [Aboriginal] own terms and carried out in their own way, as a means to re-establish some control ..." (Wolfe, 1994, p. 4).

Cowlishaw (1988, pp. 217, 219 & 230-231), Lea and Wolfe (1993, p. 2) and Wolfe (1994, p. 1) accept that change from non-Aboriginal domination to autonomous models involves a process of political change through considerable struggle and conflict. Cowlishaw (1988, p. 219 & 230) states, for example, that change involves a battle against entrenched ideology and mythology in order to overcome political, economic and social powerlessness. Those who try to improve inter-group relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people may find that there are repercussions such as interpersonal conflict. Yunupingu (1993, p. 10), however, makes it clear that Aboriginal community development will only be successful if the logic of Aboriginal people is emphasised over that of non-Aboriginal groups.
Like Lea and Wolfe (1993, p. 7), Yunupingu (1993, p. 4) believes that Aboriginal communities can plan successfully as long as they can do it according to culturally appropriate ways. Lea and Wolfe (1993, p. 11) list the features that they consider are associated with good planning in Aboriginal communities:

1. An emphasis upon traditional process and not the outcomes.

2. Planning is interactive, adaptive, flexible, sequential and may change over time.

3. Communities adopt a learning process where errors are learned from and corrective action emphasised.


5. There is a willingness to seek help from skilled and motivated people from outside the community according to the needs of the project (1993, p. 13, also Wolfe, 1994, p. 16).


7. Strong leadership is evident, particularly in the way political judgment is exercised and conflict is handled (1993, p. 13, 17 & 19).

8. Local languages are used to ensure that communication is open and thorough (1993, p. 13 & 19).

9. External agents, especially governments, should see themselves as facilitators and to provide training (1993, p. 17 & 20, also Wolfe, 1994, p. 12).
10. The structures supporting planning and development processes are simple, intelligible and inclusive of the whole community (1993, p. 20).

11. Aboriginal communities should control the development process from the initial point where terms like, 'development', 'priorities' and 'community' are defined through to the point where evaluation is carried out (1993, p. 2).

Wolfe (1994) agrees with the criteria listed above but adds the following elements:

1. The need for an awareness stage before planning commences (1994, p. 9).

2. The need to ensure that there is a transfer of awareness and planning to implementation (1994, p. 14).

3. The creation of a partnership between the community and external agents based on mutual learning (1994, p. 25).

Wolfe (1994) and Cowlishaw (1988) are somewhat pessimistic about the likelihood of Aboriginal communities being permitted to plan from within an autonomous model. Wolfe (1994, p. 20) states, for example, that “Communities are poorly equipped to bargain and negotiate with government agencies for implementation of the project components of the community plan ... [and that] ... government agencies are also poorly prepared to respond to the community plans ...”. Cowlishaw’s pessimism is based on difficulties that exist in overcoming the effects of long-standing dominant beliefs about Aboriginal people that derive from the non-Aboriginal section of the community (1988, p. 219). She acknowledges that political action is the key to achieving fundamental change but concludes that “most political initiatives are intermittent, individual and ineffective” (1988, p. 232).

The pessimism of Cowlishaw (1988) and Wolfe (1994) is based on the inequality in power that
exists between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals and groups. As Yunupingu (1993) states, there has been a historic imbalance between the power possessed by the groups and this imbalance must be addressed before Aboriginal communities will be able to control their development. One way of doing this is for non-Aboriginal people to appreciate the “internal dynamics of the Aboriginal community” (Cowlishaw, 1988, p. 226); that is, the decision-making processes that have traditionally operated to sustain Aboriginal communities. There is a need, therefore, for both groups to more closely identify with one another and create a sense of mutual learning and partnership under the authority of the Aboriginal community.

What this review of the related literature makes clear is that although partnership is theorised to be the best model for handling inter-group relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, conflict is seen to be the inevitable corollary of efforts to shift the balance of power in favour of Indigenous people. For non-Aboriginal agents, it may be theorised that a partnership with Aboriginal people means that they must surrender the power that has historically been located within their community. It is also theorised that planning and programs must be consistent with the aspirations of Aboriginal people and that efforts are directed towards providing facilitation and empowerment rather than perpetuating control regimes.

In conclusion, community development may occur according to a number of philosophies, but the only paradigm that will address the aspirations of Aboriginal communities is that which provides them with independence and autonomy. The political and social price of implementing this model, however, is very high in terms of the conflict, hostility and division that may emerge between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals and groups.

In the next part of this chapter, I will examine the impact that the movement towards establishing structures that facilitate Aboriginal control over community development may have on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups and individuals from the theoretical perspectives of change and power. I will particularly examine how reactions to change may result in barriers being erected to prevent Aboriginal people from assuming greater control over schooling and other operations of
their communities.

2.6 Theoretical perspectives on the impact of change on the structure of schooling if the aspirations of Aboriginal people are to be achieved

In this section, I will review the effect that a change in the distribution of power may have on participants in an institution such as a school. First, I will explore two options in the nature and use of power: to reproduce the position of the dominant classes within the community, or to empower individuals for the betterment of society. Then I will discuss the issue of change with reference to the theory that all fundamental change involves some degree of individual and group loss, anxiety, and struggle. I will focus on the possible reactions by the dominant, generally non-Aboriginal section of the population, to the threat or actuality of change in the distribution of power within the community. Finally, I will look at the possible effect of change on Aboriginal people as members of a disadvantaged group who wish to move from a position of having little power to one where they can make decisions on matters concerning the provision of schooling services.

2.6.1 The features and uses of power

In this section I will review two broad and opposing conceptions of the nature and use of power. The first perspective is that which derives largely from a critical neo-Marxist perspective and sees the purpose of society as the satisfaction of the needs of the members of the dominant class through the exploitation of subordinate groups. It is theorised that dominant classes maintain their privileged positions through the use of various forms of power. They also create institutions and structures to promote a supportive ideology and resist the demands of disadvantaged groups for a change in the distribution of power. The second conception of power is that it may be used to employ individuals and groups to improve various facets of society. That is, power is jointly created by groups within the community to achieve the aspirations of its members. I will consider the exploitative conception of power first.
In his analysis of a number of Australian government reports into education between 1973 and 1988, Wilson (1990, pp. 1-9) concludes that social, educational and economic inequality is closely related to the unequal distribution of power within the community. Alienation, unemployment, low aspirations and poverty are the penalties that are paid by members of disadvantaged groups because they have no power over their circumstances and do not share the ideology of the dominant group. Wilson (1990, p. 6) adds that "the exercise of power lies in the perpetuation of a particular set of values and competitive procedures which reward those who conform and penalise those who do not". Moore (1993, pp. 57-59) believes that a long-standing core feature of the values of the dominant class is racism. He suggests that racism is sustained and reproduced by the "total oppressive structuring of material and aesthetic culture and subjectiveness" (1993, p. 57). Jones (1992, p. 62) adds that "Europeans have projected Aboriginal culture according to their own criteria". That is, racist ideology from a non-Aboriginal source determines the way in which Aboriginality is constructed. Its definition is found in a context that criticises and disempowers Aboriginal people and gives legitimacy to inferior treatment and the public portrayals that come through the use of classifications in English (Morris, 1992, pp. 84-85).

Jones (1992, p. 57) and Moore (1993, pp. 57-59) go on to say that racism pervades the political, economic, linguistic, cultural and identity structures and systems in the following forms:

1. Racism and inter-class domination where the elite have power over the poor and where breeding and privilege determine the distribution of power.

2. Racism and colonial domination where Aboriginal people, in particular, have historically been seen as 'uncivilised' and unlikely to survive.

3. Racism and international domination where nations are constructed along racial lines and where some nations attempt to promote themselves as being superior because of the "inheritance of civilised blood" (Moore, 1993, p. 57).
4. Intra-class racism where people who are members of the same organisation or group may be discriminated against because of their race.

5. The creation of a concept of ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’ that preserves the dominance of a particular group and its promotion through the main language of the group.

The notion that racism defines the way in which individuals and groups interact within the community, especially in the area of schooling, is observed in various contexts by the Commonwealth Schools’ Commission (1985, p. 6), McInerney (1989, pp. 58-61), Allen (1990, p. 5), Malin (1990, p. 28), Woods (1991, p. 16), Smith (1992, p. 34), Aplet and Lingard (1992, p. 69), and Kringas and Stewart (1992, p. 20). Merelman (1993, pp. 337-338) suggests that political socialisation occurs in schools where current systems, ideology and institutions are promoted. That is, the power relations that enshrine the dominant classes are reinforced through the school system and the empowerment of subordinate groups is minimised (Harris, 1990, p. 7).

Power relations that exist between groups within the community involve a number of levels or dimensions. “On the most obvious level there is the question of what formal access members of such communities have to government decision-making procedures which determine general policies” (Carspecken, 1991, pp. 9-10). Formal access may be available to all in theory, but members of dominant groups are the ones who tend to influence structures and institutions because they know how to approach decision-makers through informal means. Groups that cannot get access to the decision-makers are exploited because their needs are not addressed (Saha and Keeves, 1990, p. 280).

On another level, power relations are based on culture. Perceptions of situations are coloured by the ability of individuals and groups to use power to change situations (power over circumstances). “Perceptions will likely be tied to past experiences and reinforced by the attitudes of friends and associates” (Carspecken, 1991, p. 10). Cultural power is determined by the extent to which groups share the ideology of various institutions and systems (Foster and Harman, 1992,
Language, the way in which knowledge is organised and communicated, and the values and beliefs of a group are examples of the components of the cultural frameworks that are assessed when relationships develop between specific groups and community structures. Owens (1981, pp. 280-288) believes that the use of power to promote the culture of one group over another signals the reason why disadvantaged groups demand change. He states that goal differences, being controlled by others, a lack of honest communication, and the competition for scarce resources cause frustration in members of disadvantaged groups and result in conflict with the structure or bureaucracy that acts as the 'gate keeper' to prevent genuine change from occurring (Zaltman and Florio, 1977, p. 38). As a statement of theory, power shows itself through forms of access to decision-making procedures, the familiarity of people with informal rules which determine the effective use of formal channels, and the interpretive cultural frameworks through which people assess their own and other people's needs and possible courses of action.

Murrell (1992, pp. 47-50) rejects the notion proposed above that power can only be used as an instrument of class domination through suppression. Rather, he promotes the concept that empowerment may be achieved through social processes where people interact so that all parties may become more powerful. “In action empowerment, it is necessary to trust in the natural ‘good’ in people and in their capability to do good ...” (1992, p. 49). It is the trust condition that is a feature of this use of power. Murrell (1992, p. 50) states that a second feature in the use of power is assertion “... or the ability of people to effectively state what they want as well as who they are”. A further feature of power is honest communication. Without clear communication it will be difficult for individuals to assert themselves by being able to share their point of view and gain agreement on purposes and goals.

McIntyre (1995, pp. 4-6) agrees with the notion that power can be used for the empowerment of all groups. While acknowledging that power has traditionally been seen as “the powerful getting their own way and the powerless suffering the consequences” (1995, p. 5), he claims that organizational and community health can only be improved if power is used in a just and compassionate
way. Koh (1995, pp. 7-8) maintains that the ideology of racism that works to disadvantage ‘weaker’ sections of the community for their ‘assumed’ good must be revised through the process of self-reflection and the discovery of new meaning. He emphasises the value of dialogue, openness and mutual respect when seeking to utilise elements of power for the benefit of the community. He goes on to state that non-Aboriginal people must adopt an attitude of humility when working with Aboriginal people. This is because there is a considerable risk that non-Aboriginal people may take a critical and domineering position without thinking due to their self-perceived superior knowledge in various situations and their acceptance of subtle propaganda that has long spread the ideology of the dominant classes.

Drew (1995, p. 13) agrees with the conception of power as a means of empowerment because she believes that the use of power “for self-aggrandisement ultimately devours the usurper and becomes a form of enslavement”. In other words, the overt exercise of power by the dominant classes to oppress minority groups is eventually destructive to everyone. Rather, power should be used to influence society for good, serving not the Self but others. Carrow-Moffett (1993, pp. 59-61) believes that it is only by individuals seeing community development in this way that empowerment of the Self and others can occur. That is, successful change with minimal resistance must occur within a framework of empowered individuals working towards a common vision and transforming the current values and beliefs that underpin the community through the process of honest self-reflection. As a result, barriers to progress are diminished and there is less likelihood of a ‘change back’ phenomenon emerging where former beliefs and practices reemerge.

To conclude this section, power may be viewed according to two distinct theories. First, power may be used for the purpose of a dominant class to exploit and oppress a disadvantaged group and impose a racist ideology through its institutions and structures, including schools. It is likely that change in the distribution of power will only be achieved through conflict. A second theory is that power may be used in a creative and empowering fashion to allow individuals to achieve their aspirations while, at the same time, contributing to the growth of the community. It is unlikely
that conflict will occur over the distribution of power because the viability of cultures is respected. Both theories present perspectives that are useful when considering the investigation at Warakurna because they were evident in some of the vignettes reported during the inquiry.

In the next section, I will discuss the concept of change according to the premise that fundamental change such as in the distribution of power may involve some degree of individual and group loss, anxiety, challenge and struggle.

2.6.2 The general effect of change on individuals

Fullan (1991, p. 31) states that the reaction by individuals to the prospect of fundamental change derives from their background experiences which construct personal meaning. A person's initial reaction to change or the prospect of change is often one of fear, concern and anticipation (Fowler, 1987, p. 51). This is not an unusual response because individuals cannot progress through religious (spiritual), cognitive, or psychological stages of growth unless they encounter serious challenges to their previously cherished beliefs and work to form a new and more sophisticated ideology (Fowler, 1987; Grimmitt, 1987). That is, change initiatives can be a catalyst from which growth may occur as individuals form new meanings about themselves and their environment (Melucci, 1989, p. 201; Fullan, 1991, p. 106). In order to achieve this end, however, change agents should "recognise the need to deal with issues of loss, even when the losses appear minor - old habits and procedures - or major - as when one's identity or sense of values is perceived to be threatened" (Carrow-Moffett, 1993, p. 59).

Fullan (1991, p. 31 & 1993, pp. 12-13) states that a change will be successful if the meaning behind the change is shared with all participants through each stage of development. That is, change needs to be gradually assimilated into the values of each participant and so become part of their personal vision or autobiography.

“Personal vision ... exists independently of the organisation or group we happen to be in ... it
gives meaning to work ... [and] forces us to take a stand for a preferred future" (Fullan, 1993, p. 13). As personal vision develops through the process of inquiry about an aspect of the environment, individuals pass through zones of uncertainty caused by the fear that new information might overwhelm cherished beliefs and theories upon which previous social activity has been based (Grimmitt, 1987, p. 79). Fullan (1991, 1993) claims that uncertainty can be replaced by a sense of personal accomplishment or mastery if the process of change facilitates personal development. On the other hand, Fowler (1987, p. 150) cautions that if change does not aid personal development and an individual refuses to embrace a particular change, then it may cause considerable frustration and conflict. Individual reactions to change are further discussed in sections 2.6.3 and 2.6.4.

The way in which an individual responds to a change initiative depends on a number of cultural factors such as peer and authority relations, personal attitudes, beliefs about control, ethnocentrism, social group solidarity and affiliation, and the presence of organisational barriers (Zaltman and Fiorio, 1977, p. 38). Fullan (1991) states that the response to change by individuals is directly related to the extent to which change initiatives affect the fundamental or core values of individuals. The value of order, purpose and meaning, and an individual’s right to self-fulfilment are examples of core values given by Grimmitt (1987, p. 121). According to Grimmitt (1987, pp. 121-128), core values are implicit within the human condition although they may be defined in different ways within various sections of the community. Each society must, therefore, respond to change in a way that provides individuals with a sense of cultural continuity and identity that is preserved through the maintenance of core values.

To sum up this section, it may be theorised that all fundamental change will draw an emotional response from individuals but the nature of that response will depend on how the changes affect the core values and beliefs that represent an individual’s personal and societal cultural heritage.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the product of change must be kept separate from the process of change because the impact of the process upon an individual’s sense of personal
meaning is where the destiny of a particular change initiative rests (Fowler, 1987, p. 105). It is necessary, therefore, to examine the contribution that academic literature has to make on the nature of the personal histories and culture of individuals who are involved in the change process in this research (the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants) and the way in which they may respond to the prospect or reality of change.

2.6.3 Issues of change within the Aboriginal community

As was described in section 2.4.1, the findings of Theis (1987) in the East Kimberley (Western Australia), McClay (1989) at Lajamanu (Northern Territory) and McGinty (1989) in the Ngananyatjarra Lands (Western Australia) indicate a depth of thinking and forward planning by many Aboriginal people. Reaburn (1989) and Randell (personal communication, 4 October 1993) similarly emphasise the clear thinking and planning ability of Aboriginal groups but stress the need to conduct decision-making in culturally appropriate ways (also in Reaburn, 1989; Bourke, Guthrie, Huggins and Turker, 1990, p. 6; Willmett, 1991, p. 40). They point, for example, to the need for the ‘old men’, the traditional decision-makers, to play key roles in discussions on the development of communities. Randell (personal communication, 4 October 1993) claims that, “without engaging in decision-making according to the proper methods and with the right people, any decisions that are made will be doomed to fail”.

The second point to make in regard to the change process within the Aboriginal community, at least in the initial stages, is that it is often politically oriented (Willmett, 1991, pp. 40-41). Such action is necessary in order to convince the non-Aboriginal community that “only Aboriginal people can develop themselves ... [and] ... Aboriginal people will embrace development when they have a sense of control over it”. Brown (1990, p. 1) similarly states that one reason why advances have been made in Aboriginal education since 1967 is:

the politicizing of Aboriginal communities by Aboriginal people in the formation of Cooperatives, with local educational consultative groups, regional education groups, State education consultative groups and, until recently, a National education group.
The view that power must be achieved and then refashioned through political action, at least as part of the initial change process, is shared by Owens (1981, p. 288), Fullan (1991, p. 58) and Kringas and Stewart (1992, p. 23). Fullan (1991, p. 58) sets the scene by arguing that, “In relatively stable or continuous communities there is a tendency for innovations favoring the least advantaged not to be proposed (the bias of neglect)”. He adds that ‘poorly educated’ groups are unlikely to initiate change and cannot always hold onto the power necessary to sustain the change process and so achieve their goals. This is because empowerment can give way to becoming overburdened and so result in individuals feeling distressed rather than inspired (Gamage, 1993, p. 145). Fullan (1991, p. 59) concludes, however, that once change is activated (often by some external senior political stimulus), members of disadvantaged groups can be very effective in sustaining the change because they are able to set and implement an agenda for development which meets their needs (Kemmis, 1988b, p. 138; Jordan, 1989, p. 1; Harris, 1990, pp. 14, 16 & 116). As part of the development of a theoretical framework appropriate to this investigation, it is theorised that fundamental change may be pursued by a group of Aboriginal people who are able to work in a political context according to culturally appropriate ways.

As mentioned in section 2.4.1, however, the achievement by Aboriginal people of political control over the change process in schooling in rural communities means that there has to be a redefining of many of the ‘truths’ upon which schooling has historically been based. Smith (1992, p. 42) claims, “the concept of ‘education’ needs to be rethought in a more holistic way so it fits an overall plan for community development negotiated at the local level”. Specifically, the components of ‘truth’ and how ‘knowledge’ should be assimilated by students through curriculum philosophy, design and pedagogy need to be examined (Eckermann, 1981 & 1985; the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, pp. 39-40; Harris, 1988, pp. 76 & 78; Christie, 1990, pp. 2-3, Attwood and Arnold, 1992, p. ii; Smith, 1992, p. 42). The limited extent to which Aboriginal people have been able to facilitate the reconceptualising process in the past indicates that the European context in which schooling has historically been based stands as a barrier to Aboriginal people bringing about fundamental change to the schooling that they receive.
Another barrier to Aboriginal people assuming fundamental ownership of the schooling process is that few have received the training to be able to take on new responsibilities (the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990, p. 5; Fullan, 1991, p. 58; Smith, 1992, p. 35). The Aboriginal population has been exposed to a history of colonialism, paternalism, and irrelevancy and has not been able to define and control important aspects of their development (Theophanous, 1980, pp. 6-7; Brown, 1986, pp. 392-395; Morris, 1992, pp. 72-88; Harris, 1993, p. 5). Moreover, inadequate training that has been offered to Aboriginal people has made it easy for the non-Aboriginal community to frustrate their aspirations (the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990, p. 24). Coupled with economic dependency that has been created by very high levels of unemployment, indebtedness and poverty (Altman, 1985, p. 6), patterns of social dependency that have existed for many years are likely to be perpetuated within Aboriginal communities. In other words, it may be theorised that while many Aboriginal people may desire to control the schooling system in which their children are involved, they frequently do not know how to achieve it in a way that is successful in placing their interests above those of the non-Aboriginal community.

Smith (1992, p. 35) agrees that many Aboriginal communities may not be able to achieve their aspirations using their own resources and that the needs of Aboriginal groups are often rationalised, dismissed, redirected, or otherwise blocked by barriers erected by non-Aboriginal decision-makers (Fullan, 1991, p. 34). In view of this problem, a key function of non-Aboriginal teachers is "to learn a supportive role which will promote Aboriginal leadership" and provide Aboriginal people with power over their lives (Harris, 1990, pp. 18 & 154). Koh (1995, p. 8) agrees with this view from his perspective as a doctor with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. He states that he acts to foster greater independence in his patients by engaging with them in the dialogue of equality where no one assumes a superior position. For example, he requests patients to advise him as to what they think may be causing their poor health and what they may be able to do to remedy it. "True dialogue demands humility and a movement together towards the truth" (1995, p. 9). The result is the contemplation and discovery of new meaning in order to come to a deeper understanding of the Self.
By first accepting that they only possess delegated authority, non-Aboriginal teachers must see themselves as serving the local community (Harris, 1990, pp. 18 & 154). The Aboriginal community must "have the ultimate authority to define the aims and purposes of the school" (Harris, 1990, pp. 18-19). Interaction must be directed towards achieving objectives that have previously been defined by appropriate Aboriginal people (Jordan, 1989, p. 1). The strength of having non-Aboriginal teachers acting according to the principle of delegated authority is that it allows Aboriginal people to make steps of faith (Fullan, 1991, p. 34; 1993, p. 13) into previously unknown realms of decision-making but with support from advisors who will not attempt to usurp their authority.

In view of the economic, educational and social barriers erected by the non-Aboriginal community, which effectively prevent Aboriginal people from achieving their aspirations, the theoretical framework which offers most hope for improved intergroup relations is the notion that non-Aboriginal people who work closely with Aboriginal communities should adopt a facilitating role according to the principle of delegated authority within a general structure of equal power relations. Similarly, it is held here that because non-Aboriginal people have historically controlled most aspects of the lives of the Aboriginal community, decision-making under Aboriginal authority involve acts of faith, according to different definitions of 'truth' and strategies determined by a culture that is quite dissimilar to the one which has dominated policies and procedures in mainstream society.

The ability of Aboriginal groups to achieve self-determination has been constrained by a lack of training, the suppression of their values and beliefs, and their failure to produce strong individual leadership on issues that affect their role in non-Aboriginal society (the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990, p. 7). Therefore, there has often been no rallying point for ideas and campaigns on issues related to self-determination. Fullan (1991, p. 27) and Merelman (1993, pp. 337-338), however, suggest that the presence of committed leaders is an essential criterion for the success of change initiatives. Aboriginal people frequently find issues that have a non-Aboriginal foundation (such as management and decision-making in con-
temporary institutions) to be unattractive, onerous, boring, and often contrary to cultural priorities particularly when individuals are accountable primarily to kin rather than to, say, an external funding body (the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990, p. 7).

A way around this problem, and consistent with an earlier theoretical statement, is to remove the decision-making process from the realm of non-Aboriginal practice and to place it into systems that are normally associated with traditional Aboriginal people. Randell (in Bourke, Guthrie, Huggins and Turker, 1990) details a model of decision-making based on a workshop approach. It attempts to satisfy the key aspects of traditional processes particularly in regard to the need for people to move forward as a group. A synthesis of the workshop approach emphasises the following elements:

1. An active and flexible learning and sharing situation.

2. People work in small groups (or families) and use skills of cooperation, critical thinking and sharing in order to make discoveries.

3. Participants identify the directions in which decisions should proceed.

4. A process of steady refinement from raw data to sophisticated recommendations.

5. Working within a time frame that is established by the Aboriginal community.

6. Recognition of the significant role played by Aboriginal decision-makers.

Reaburn's (1989) description of the decision-making process at Yirrkala (Northern Territory), that led to the development of a teacher education program shows a number of features of decision-making that are similar to those promoted by Randell. Reaburn (1989) believes that the
strength of the decision-making process at Yirrkala includes:

1. Endorsement of decisions by the 'old men' who promote the ideology of the group (also see Kemmis, 1988a, p. 2).

2. Active participation by all members of the community.

3. The achievement of Aboriginal control by employing non-Aboriginal personnel and resources within established parameters that are directed towards achieving community goals.

An important theory behind Randell's workshop approach (1990) and Reaburn's (1989) observation of decision-making processes at Yirrkala is that, while Aboriginal people may move cautiously through zones of uncertainty riddled with dissatisfaction, inconsistency, conflict and fear during the change process, they are able to move together with a shared understanding of what the process means and can have their misgivings dealt with as part of a group and not have them dismissed as being irrelevant.

To conclude this discussion on the change with respect to Aboriginal people, it would be fair to say that any recommendation to increase Aboriginal people's control over decision-making processes within their communities must take account of the significant barriers that exist if it is to have any chance of being achieved, otherwise such a recommendation will just be a theoretical statement of a distant vision. These barriers centre on the effect that the historic separation of Aboriginal people from positions of authority has had on their capacity in the short term to assume positions of significant power. None of the barriers should be seen as insurmountable. It is possible that they have arisen because the issues they represent have been tackled from non-Aboriginal perspectives and that the act of reconstituting those perspectives according to Aboriginal expectations will break down a number of the barriers to a successful change process.

2.6.4 Issues of change for non-Aboriginal participants
McTaggart (1989, pp. 37-44) outlines the first type of non-Aboriginal response to the prospect of change. He states that an effort to cling to power occurs when non-Aboriginal people refuse to face the possibility of change that may result in the empowerment of Aboriginal people:

This can be put into effect in several ways, for example: by providing expert knowledge about the teaching of English language and Western mathematics; by continuing to assume dominant roles and nurturing dependence; by demonstrating how things should be done instead of supporting Aboriginal people as they actually do things for themselves; and by asserting and acting as if Aboriginal people are not and will not be ready or competent to take substantive control (1989, p. 37).

This description of the thinking and behavioural patterns of some non-Aboriginal people is based on their presumption that schooling should be conducted within the custom and practice of the dominant capitalist non-Aboriginal community (Sarason and Doris, 1979, p. 361; Codd, 1983a, p. 65; Fullan, 1991, pp. 25-26; Kringas and Stewart, 1992, p. 23). This may be seen in Merry’s description of the decision-making processes that occurs at Warakurna (personal correspondence, March 1992, p. 7). She states that, “many members of the [Aboriginal] community seem unwilling to broach any new ideas on what they think should be done. They all sit quietly and look away”. Merry (1992, p. 7) goes on to say that, “vocally strong members of the community have had their say, only to be ignored, or basically misinterpreted, and are unwilling to waste their time and energy in being patronised and humiliated again”. Change is talked about but not from the Aboriginal perspective and so nothing happens.

While one possible response to change or the threat of change is the effort by the dominant group to cling to power, McTaggart (1989) and Merry (1992) suggest that a second but closely related response is that of defensiveness. An attempt is made to prevent change from being initiated because there is no perceived personal or institutional gain to non-Aboriginal people in embracing the change (Kringas and Stewart, 1992, p. 23). Kimbrough and Burkett (1990, pp. 134-136) state that, “all individual needs are established on a personal premise ... [and] ... every personal action may be initiated by a self-serving motive”. Fullan (1991, p. 128) agrees that change will be embraced if there are personally significant rewards to be earned. In other words, non-Aboriginal people will only be willing to share power with the Aboriginal group if it is within their perceived
self-interest. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990, p. 118) investigated instances where a defensive attitude was shown by some non-Aboriginal people when faced with the prospect of a change in the power relations between them and the Aboriginal community. Within the theoretical framework of this investigation, it may be hypothesised that if non-Aboriginal people do not see it benefiting their personal interest to engage in fundamental change with Aboriginal people, they will work to prevent any change from being initiated and attempt to preserve their dominant status.

A third response to change by non-Aboriginal people is to promote it at a theoretical level but to deny it in practice (Hall, 1981, p. 117). Merelman (1993, p. 336) refers to this response as absorption and insulation. This means that demands for change may be met by the dominant community isolating and compromising the leaders of change or by granting the elements of change that do not embrace community action (Grundy, 1992). Kringas and Stewart (1992, pp. 21-22) present a similar description when they state that “reforms have traditionally come in response to action by Aboriginal people but oppositional demands have been ‘cooled out’ ... [indirect opposition as shown in frustrating delays in dealing with issues and demands] ... to win acquiescence from members of the groups to the system which oppresses them”. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990, pp. 10-11 & 15), for example, identifies a conflict between governments encouraging Aboriginal people to become self-determining but then associating self-determination with bureaucratic requirements which few Aboriginal people have been trained to meet or which conflict with traditional cultural values (see also McClay, 1988, p. 270; Aplet and Lingard, 1992, p. 68). As a result, non-Aboriginal personnel often act in a paternalistic manner through the exercise of personal power when dealing with Aborigines, while believing that they are promoting the best interests of the people (McClay, 1988, p. 292). They may superficially embrace the features of change, but not effectively change at all because they refuse to assimilate the change into their subjective realities (Fullan, 1991, p. 35; Merelman, 1993, p. 336). Their actions cause Aboriginal decision-making to become distorted. Aboriginal people lose what responsibilities they may have once held and they become more dependent on non-Aboriginal personnel, demoralised by their lack of success in pursuing a particular change
A fourth reaction occurs when the change process is actually occurring. It is seen in the *previously dominant group attempting to redefine its position* and establish a new balance of order to preserve its current position in the first instance and perhaps later recover lost ground. Robertson (1992, p. 4) argues that class rule is in a period of sustained crisis, which has "provided a rationale for the need to renegotiate political and social arrangements, whilst at the same time redefining the boundaries, discourse, and issues of that debate". The dominant, largely non-Aboriginal, class is directing its efforts in a formative sense and reflecting a new balance of forces. Elements are emerging to create a new 'historical bloc', new political configurations and philosophies, and a profound restructuring of the State and the ideological discourse which surrounds it. New programs are developing, old formations are breaking down, and previous ideologies are being challenged. Moreover, as the crisis of State continues, the 'lived realities' of groups has become one of contradiction and conflict. Ideologies, policies and programs do not emerge, but are constructed within certain limits that are established during the discourse between groups (Hall, 1981, p. 117).

Merelman (1993, pp. 336-337) uses military terminology when describing the resistance by dominant groups to challenges from subordinate classes especially in the way that structures and institutions respond. Adapting points made by Forgacs (1988, p. 227), Merelman (1993, p. 337) claims that it is likely that an attack by a minority group would only destroy the outer perimeter of the defensive system, "and at the moment of their attack the assailants would find themselves confronted by a line of defence which was still effective" (Forgacs, 1988, p. 227). The attack on the dominant group will not necessarily have failed but the outcome of the struggle remains in doubt.

In concluding her argument about the process through which dominant classes redefine their boundaries when facing the challenge to bring about equality between groups, Robertson (1992, p. 14) suggests that ideological discourse and debate often occurs in a setting where "those mar-
ginal political, economic and social groups left outside fail to have a voice”. Aboriginal people are therefore having to increasingly resort to political action (see section 2.6.3) in order to gain a voice and ensure their needs are identified in the new ideology that is emerging within the Australian society (the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, p. 79; Wunungumurra, 1988, p. 69; Brown, 1990, p. 1; Willmett, 1991, pp. 40-41). Brown (1990, p. 163) makes a pertinent comment in relation to the emergence of a new ideology within the community by stating that:

Aboriginalization is not something which needs to happen to the Aboriginal people involved in education. Aboriginal people do not need Aboriginalization. It is white educators who need to be Aboriginalized, white assumptions, white perspectives, white values, and white structures.

His statement clearly advocates strong political action by Aboriginal people in order to take advantage of the debate on social and political restructuring that is occurring within the community. Such action is necessary to prevent the dominant non-Aboriginal group from reestablishing the elements of the previous order and so marginalising Aboriginal interests and goals (Carrow-Moffett, 1993, p. 61). In other words, unless the Aboriginal voice is insistent and assertive, a changing social fabric will not include their aspirations and so the new boundaries that are established will exclude them from having equality with non-Aboriginal groups and a greater sense of control over their lives (Malone, 1979; Brown, 1986, pp. 389 & 391; Singh, 1990).

A fifth possible response to change is that of a temporary positive response through an act of faith. People embrace change as inevitable and perhaps promising a particular laudable outcome. They will, however, not understand the principles or rationale for change and so will not appreciate the nature of the values and practices that they will have to display in order to be able to implement change over a long period of time (Fullan, 1991, p. 40). They may become involved in negotiating concessions with change agents and so attempt to become role-makers rather than role-takers (Chadbourne, 1989, pp. 53-59).

A sixth possible reaction by non-Aboriginal people to the prospect of change in the balance of
power with Aboriginal people is to *encourage the process and provide support for a positive outcome* to the process of change (Chadbourne, 1989, pp. 53-59). Lanhupuy (1988, p. 3) claims that there is an unstoppable trend occurring where, “Aboriginal people themselves will ultimately decolonise their schools and create a new form of this social institution for modern Aboriginal Australians”. He agrees with Altman (1985 & 1987), Gale, Jordan, McGill, McNamara and Scott (1987, p. 274), Harris (1990), Aboriginal Independent Schools (1992, p. 2), and Koh (1995, pp. 7-9), that Aboriginal people must fulfil their aspirations by being able to control the process of change in schooling as well as in other areas. The best option, therefore, is for non-Aboriginal people to support this change and to work to establish a firm relationship with the Aboriginal community so that each can learn from the other (Harris, 1988, p. 76; Yunupingu, 1988, pp. 4-5; Harris, 1990, pp. 29-42).

Harris (1990, p. 118) describes the teacher who is supportive of change as needing to “discern where desire for control is developing, and when asked, to support that desire from behind the scenes in a non-manipulative way”. The non-Aboriginal person who encourages a more equitable distribution of power between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups emphasises community ownership of decisions on change and believes that working in partnership under Aboriginal authority is the only way in which Aboriginal aspirations will be achieved.

In a context removed from schooling but still relevant to the concept being outlined here, John Harris (1994, p. 873) suggests that the enduring strength of the Christian revival of the early 1980s in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, lies in the total control of the revival by local Aboriginal people. While a number of non-Aboriginal people facilitated initial aspects of the revival, Aboriginal men held the decision-making authority. Similarly, Koh (1995, pp. 7-9) writes about his efforts to surrender his institutionally recognised authority as a ‘doctor’ and to receive direction from his Aboriginal employers in Victoria. He states that the non-Aboriginal classes must empower Aboriginal people by giving them power to control their lives. This is best done by engaging in genuine dialogue based on equality, openness and mutual respect.
The sixth type of response to the change process requires special skills in non-Aboriginal teachers some of which have been briefly mentioned in section 2.6.3. The skills may be seen within five main categories:

1. Non-Aboriginal teachers must believe that Aboriginal people are capable of reaching high standards in knowledge and work performance (Harris, 1978, p. 61; Harris, 1988, p. 78; Malin, 1990, p. 313). They must also believe that the change process can have a positive impact on the learning of students and in raising the status of schooling in the perception of community members (McInerney, 1989, p. 61; Kimbrough and Burkett, 1990, pp. 142-143).

2. Teachers must be committed to reducing the power differentials that have historically existed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups so that schooling can become a true community enterprise (Cummins, 1988, p. 310; Reid, 1992, p. 8). This means they need to appreciate that schooling is a process of genuine interaction between the heritage of two quite distinct cultures (Harris, 1990, p. 12; Christie, 1992, p. 13) and that each culture has value that is worth passing on through the function of formal schooling.

3. Teachers must believe that they are serving the needs of the Aboriginal people and are assisting them to achieve their aspirations (see section 2.6.1) (Theis, 1987; Kemmis, 1988b, p. 138; Jordan, 1989, p. 2; Harris, 1990, pp. 18 & 154). To help achieve this objective, non-Aboriginal teachers must genuinely involve Aboriginal people in running the school in all areas (Watson, 1985, p. 16; McClay, 1988, p. 276; Willmett, 1991, p. 1).

4. Non-Aboriginal teachers should attempt to form sincere friendships with the local people and closely mix with them on an out-of-school basis as well as in-school (Cohen, 1973; Habermas, 1979, p. 3; McClay, 1988, p. 213; Harris, 1990, pp. 13 & 29-42). This point is especially significant when it is recalled that Aboriginal people generally prefer to interact on the basis of meaning and the quality of the individual rather than according to purpose or function (Christie, 1985, p. 11; Harris, 1990, pp. 28-30). It is also important when it is seen in the light
of the principle that:

true dialogue is achieved through the development of the understandings that we gain about our own culture as we learn about another culture ... through the features of friendship such as genuineness, openness, equality and respect (Cavanagh and Rodwell, 1992, p. 76).

5. Teachers must assess the capacity and interest of the Aboriginal community to control change and then work in a supportive way to encourage thought and subsequent innovation (Jordan, 1989, p. 2; Harris, 1990, pp. 18 & 154; Smith, 1992, p. 35). They must always be mindful, however, that ultimate authority lies in the hands of the Aboriginal community (the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985, pp. 39-40; Poulson, 1988, p. 69; Harris, 1990, pp. 14, 16 & 116).

The theory implicit in these points is that a genuine partnership between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can only develop if decision-making practices are consistent with the experiences and traditional expectations of Aboriginal people and that the resulting decisions are implemented by appropriate personnel working according to the principle of delegated authority (also see earlier theory on the role of non-Aboriginal employees).

The discussion regarding possible responses to change by the dominant non-Aboriginal group suggests two theories. First, the pursuit of change by a minority culture that has experienced a history of oppression and domination must be ongoing because it is likely that resistance will continue to occur from members and organisations within the previously dominant culture. Second, change must be a political process because it involves challenging and redefining the role and significance of structures and institutions that make up the fabric of the community.

To sum up this section on the possible effect of change on Aboriginal people, it may be concluded that it is difficult for Aboriginal people to achieve greater control over their personal and group life. Long-standing barriers have excluded Aboriginal people from assuming genuine control over school decision-making. As a result, the process of empowerment is uncertain and risky because
it requires individuals and organisations to step away from the beliefs and behaviours of the dominant group and embrace practices that are culturally appropriate to Aboriginal people. The outcome of this process is a strong reaction (positive or negative) from the non-Aboriginal participants who are affected by the change process.

2.7 Summary of theoretical framework for this investigation, conclusions from the literature review, and suggestions for further research

This section brings together the principles that have been suggested during the literature review in order to draw conclusions from the discussion. The principles will be employed in Chapter Six to assist in drawing conclusions from the investigation at Warakurna and to highlight areas requiring further research.

The first principle is that power may be viewed according to the extent to which individuals and groups have access to the decision-making authority that will enable them to achieve their aspirations. Dominant groups have historically used informal and formal rules and channels within a cultural framework in order to achieve their goals and to suppress others. That is, they have implemented a racist ideology through the community’s institutions and structures, including schools, in order to erect barriers that prevent minority groups from achieving their goals.

Because the dominant non-Aboriginal community has historically possessed all of the decision-making power, terms like ‘legitimacy’, ‘community interest’ and ‘truth’ have been defined according to a Western context. Policies and strategies have benefited the non-Aboriginal community and there has been inequality in the distribution of resources and power. Similarly, there has been a lack of commitment from the non-Aboriginal community to allow Aboriginal people to achieve their goals. For example, schools have historically operated from a non-Aboriginal cultural context and Aboriginal people have been largely excluded from decision-making authority. As a result, schools have little idea about the objectives of Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal people see no relevance in schooling as an aid to helping them to achieve their aspirations. Aboriginal people are excluded from decision-making authority and they have few avenues to bring
about the change that would be required for them to be able to pursue their aspirations. If Aboriginal people are going to see schooling as a vehicle for realising community goals, then they will need to have the decision-making power that can bring about significant and sustained change.

The second principle suggested by the literature review is that all fundamental change involves some degree of individual and group loss, anxiety, resistance, challenge and struggle. The nature of the response depends on how the change affects the core values and beliefs that represent an individual’s personal and cultural background. When change involves a disempowered group challenging the dominant group, two processes are likely to occur. First, change will include political action because it involves challenging and redefining the role and significance of structures and institutions that make up the fabric of the community. It is a process of reshaping the community and not simply restructuring existing elements. Therefore, if Aboriginal people are invited to participate in decision-making within a school but there is no preparedness to transform the racist ideology that influences the ethos of the school, then it is unlikely that Aboriginal views will be effectively represented in school operations, and power will remain with the dominant non-Aboriginal community.

Secondly, conflict is likely to occur during a change process. Conflict occurs if the dominant community actively resists the efforts of the minority group to redress the unequal balance of power. The dominant group does not view change as creative and empowering for all members of the community but sees it as a threat that must be resisted.

As political action and conflict occur, Aboriginal people will have to move cautiously through zones of uncertainty that are riddled with dissatisfaction, inconsistency, conflict and fear. Members of the community will need to have a shared understanding of what their goals are and the strategies that must be implemented to realise these goals in the face of opposition. A small group of Aboriginal leaders who are able to work in a bicultural and political context, but according to culturally appropriate ways, may be able to facilitate the change that will help Aboriginal communities to achieve their goals. Despite the skills of these leaders, however, the transformation in
power relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups is an act of faith as strategies are embraced that are dissimilar to those that have historically defined the cultural relations between the groups.

A third principle that emerges from the literature review is that the development of Aboriginal communities under Aboriginal control requires local Aboriginal people to be able to make decisions in an autonomous fashion. At the same time, the non-Aboriginal community must view Aboriginal aspirations as legitimate and work to empower Aboriginal community members. In the short term, at least, Aboriginal communities may need to employ appropriately qualified non-Aboriginal people to work under Aboriginal control but with delegated authority. For example, in the absence of trained Aboriginal teachers, a partnership may need to operate in schools as non-Aboriginal teachers work with Aboriginal parents to make schooling more relevant to Aboriginal students and thereby improve learning standards. The dominant non-Aboriginal group will need to surrender its historic power and work as partners with Aboriginal people but under Aboriginal governance in order to promote Aboriginal aspirations and ensure that the culture of the school reflects part of the culture of the Aboriginal community. Similarly, research into Aboriginal schooling will have to include the Aboriginal 'voice' free from the constraints imposed upon it by unequal power relations.

The fourth principle is that many Aboriginal people have well-considered aspirations for the schooling of their children but, in order for those aspirations to be realised, schooling must become more culturally symmetrical with the students' background, including language. This may occur with the appointment of Aboriginal teachers, the reshaping of school governance and through two-way schooling. Two-way schooling may enable the introduction of a curricula that respects the viability and value of Aboriginal culture along with knowledge and skills from the Western domain that are seen by Aboriginal people to be valuable in helping achieve community objectives. To satisfy the aims of two-way schooling, Aboriginal people must have authority over school decision-making processes because only appropriate Aboriginal people can decide the sort of policies and programs that schools should follow in order to be consistent with community-
derived parameters.

Figure 2.1 summarises the principles according to the effect of a shift in power relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups.

One significant finding that can be drawn from this literature review is that formal schooling is increasingly seen by Aboriginal people as one of the keys to achieving the aspirations of the Aboriginal community (Theis, 1987; Jordan, 1988; Lanhupuy, 1988, p. 3; Mcinerney, 1989, p. 61; Reaburn, 1989; Nirrpuranydji, 1991, p. 85). The importance of schooling has given rise to a variety of school types, philosophies and curriculums.

**Figure 2.1**
The effect of a change in power relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups

![Diagram showing the transition from paternalism to autonomy](image)

- **Aboriginal community**
  - Non-Aboriginal institutions, structures & ideology
  - School
  - Community

- **Non-Aboriginal institutions, structures & ideology**
  - Change
  - Emotional response
  - Surrender historic roles
  - Resistance
  - Political activity

- **Aboriginal community**
  - Community
  - School

Division between school & community
2.8 Implications for further research

On the one hand, there are non-government schools that have been established under the authority of the local Aboriginal community and where links between the community and the school are very close (such as at Punmu and Parngurr in Western Australia and Yirrkala in the Northern Territory). Attempts are made in these schools to socialise students into an identity that is derived from their traditional background and there is an attempt to create a close symmetry between community expectations and school goals. On the other hand, most schools are government-controlled and students experience a largely Western-derived curriculum (Crawford, 1989; Nurrpuranydji, 1991, p. 85). Students in these schools are generally expected to reflect largely non-Aboriginal values and attitudes in their behaviour and this can cause inconsistencies to develop between the community culture and the school culture (Harris, 1978; Woods, 1991, p. 16; Aboriginal Independent Schools, 1992, p. 8). Writers have implied that many schools function according to the philosophy of assimilation, which may cause students to become alienated from their traditional lifestyle and family responsibilities but not acquire the social cues to be able to assume positions of power within the Western community (Singh, 1990; Smith, 1992, p. 35). In such schools, the Aboriginal community lacks a sense of ownership over the school and learning activities are often irrelevant and foreign to the background experiences of students (McInerney, 1989, p. 61).

In the light of the historic lack of involvement in formal schooling by Aboriginal people and the suggestion by Malen, Ogawa and Kranz (1991, pp. 289-342) that the issue of community participation in the governance of local schools should be investigated, it is important that research be conducted into the processes that individual schools work through as they consult and negotiate with the community in order to generate a partnership that will reflect “a strong sense of shared purpose, clear goals and high expectations” (McTaggart, 1990, p. 9; McGaw, Banks and Piper, 1991, p. 14).

Smith (1992, p. 7) adds that the focus of inquiry should be on individual schools and communi-
ties because the concept of ‘self-determination’ is assimilationist if applied in a general context, in that Aboriginal people live in varied situations and have different hopes. Decision-making processes, therefore, should recognise the students’ home environment and programs should be designed to take advantage of individual learning strengths, communicative patterns, culture and language. These programs should operate, however, in such a way that co-exists with non-Aboriginal derived knowledge that the Aboriginal community has decided is necessary for students to acquire in order to achieve the goals of schooling that have been established by the community (Harris, 1984; Reaburn, 1989; Smith, 1992, pp. 34-35).

The literature review indicates that the issues regarding school-community development are similar to those concerning community development in general. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of political activity in order to achieve a model of community development that is consistent with the culture and aspirations of the Aboriginal people and where non-Aboriginal people will accept a redefining of their role and power base. The scarcity of communities where Aboriginal groups control their own development makes research on this topic important. That is, there is some ‘trail blazing’ to be done.

2.9 Conclusion

The literature review highlights the need for a shift in the locus of power in schools and communities from reflecting the aims of the generally dominant non-Aboriginal group to being resourced by Aboriginal goals and aspirations. The effect of such a shift on the ideology of schooling and community development can create tension, confusion and conflict as one side is forced to surrender the dominant role in decision-making and the other side struggles to take up those responsibilities (Reaburn, 1989; Carspecken, 1991; Fullan, 1991; Robertson, 1992, p. 44). The very definition of terms like ‘schooling’, ‘planning’ and ‘community’ must be reviewed and a new clarity and culture established. This occurs as a revised sense of order emerges within the dynamic structures of organisations and structures and a start is made to develop a tradition of community involvement in the schooling and community development process similar to that which
has long been established within mainstream society (McGaw, Banks and Piper, 1991; Gamage, 1993).

In some instances, the outcome of this change process in schooling has led to the establishment of independent schools, because Aboriginal communities have experienced significant difficulties in achieving appropriate authority in school decision-making within the parameters laid down by the government-school system (Aboriginal Independent Schools, 1992). In other cases, change initiatives have been forced to hurdle a number of barriers that have been built by powerful non-Aboriginal bureaucracies (Aplet and Lingard, 1992, p. 68). Perhaps the most fundamental barrier that has been erected is that 'self-determination' has been constructed according to non-Aboriginal social, economic, cultural and political parameters (Smith, 1992, p. 7). As a result, school goals decided by the Aboriginal community have been manipulated in order to be consistent with the expectations of the non-Aboriginal community (Nirrparundayji, 1991, p. 85; Bindarriy, Yangarri-ny, Mingalpa and Warlkunji, 1991, pp. 170-176; Aboriginal Independent Schools, 1992). This has caused Aboriginal people to become frustrated in their attempt to pursue a community-derived change agenda (Merelman, 1993, p. 336).

This literature review suggests that the distribution of power between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people does not have to result in conflict, frustration and struggle. Rather, power can be distributed in such a way as to assist individuals to achieve their aims and to meet the community development aspirations of all groups. This view of the use of power requires individuals and groups to work in a genuine partnership with each other. This means that members of the dominant class must provide opportunities for people from oppressed classes to become part of the decision-making process without having to surrender the integrity of their culture. In Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people need to work according to the principle of delegated responsibility under the authority of Aboriginal decision-makers. The Aboriginal community decides what Western skills the community must acquire in order to achieve its aspirations and the non-Aboriginal people who are suitable to supply those skills. At the same time, however, the culture of the Aboriginal group is maintained as it is transmitted through the vernacular.
Referred to as a two-way or both-ways approach to an Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal partnership, the best of the Western tradition can be absorbed into the Aboriginal culture and, as a result, Aboriginal people can increasingly fill the operational positions of the community.

A major shortcoming in the academic literature is the scarcity of studies that analyse how two-way partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can develop in government-controlled schools, particularly where there is only a recent tradition in schooling and where there are few Aboriginal teachers. While McGaw, Piper, Banks, and Evans (1991, p. 11) claim that, "With the introduction of public schooling over a century ago, the home and the school effectively entered into an agreement to share responsibility for student learning", the absence of such an agreement between the government-run school and Aboriginal people has not encouraged a similar tradition of schooling to emerge in remote schools with a largely Aboriginal population (Rowley, 1971; Stannage, 1981; Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1985, p. 8; Crawford, 1989). It is suggested, therefore, that the absence of a tradition based on a two-way partnership must affect the extent to which the Aboriginal community can enter into an active dialogue with the non-Aboriginal participants in the school.

A further shortcoming in the literature is the scarcity of investigation on how government-run schools that attempt to involve Aboriginal people in decision-making processes deal with the possible impact of such empowerment on traditional power-bases such as those located in the structure of the non-Aboriginal bureaucracy and within sections of the community in which the school is located. There is some literature, however, that describes the function of homeland outstations that have been started by the local Aboriginal community and are run outside of government control (Haslett and Whiteford, 1980; Coutts, 1983; Mangiru, 1983). There is also some literature emerging regarding issues of school viability in a number of government-run schools, particularly in the Northern Territory (Bunbury, Hastings, Henry and McTaggart, 1991). In these schools, Aboriginal people have worked to improve student learning and school relevance by drawing heavily upon the culture of the students and involving the community in the decision-making process (Kemmis, 1988b; Reaburn, 1989; Bunbury, Hastings, Henry and McTaggart,
The scarcity of literature on Aboriginal involvement in schooling is also reflected in the lack of research that has been done into the function of autonomous models of Aboriginal community development. This is because so little activity has occurred in this area. Some authors reviewed in this chapter have expressed pessimism that Aboriginal communities will ever be permitted to work within the autonomous philosophy of decision-making by the dominant non-Aboriginal society because the conflict that will arise will force participants back to the former structure of relations. Others believe that the reconceptualising of power as an empowering agent rather than an exploitative force will enable such an achievement to occur and that a shift in power between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people will be institutionalised into the tradition of some communities.

Developing the scope of research on the topic of how a genuine school-community partnership developed between 1992 and 1994 is the main purpose of this dissertation. This literature review has synthesised five important questions that must be dealt with in order to achieve the purpose of this investigation:

1. How can improvement be undertaken in a government-controlled school so that the achievement of Aboriginal community aspirations and goals may be fulfilled within the context of satisfying operational guidelines laid down by non-Aboriginal derived Education Act rules and regulations?

2. What factors prevent the relationship between the local school and the community from developing into a genuine partnership?

3. How can school development be undertaken with significant Aboriginal involvement when members have rarely been involved in decision-making before and may appear, at least in the first instance, to be unwilling to become involved, or perhaps feel unable to initiate
such involvement? Similarly, how will members of the non-Aboriginal community react to the prospect of change and the resulting shift in the balance of decision-making power?

4. What will be the effect of Aboriginal participation and governance in school decision-making on other structures and processes within the wider community?

5. How can community development occur whereby the local Aboriginal population controls the process and is able to create a structure that preserves their authority in spite of their lack of expertise in the short to medium term in certain community operations?

Before exploring these issues, it is necessary to describe the paradigm of research that was employed during the investigation at Warakurna and to discuss the way in which a number of philosophical and operational issues were addressed prior to the investigation getting under way.
CHAPTER THREE

PHILOSOPHY OF RESEARCH AND
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PHILOSOPHY OF RESEARCH AND METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

This chapter describes the paradigm of research that was employed during the investigation at Warakurna and reviews a number of philosophical issues that needed clarification prior to the commencement of the investigation. In the first section, I will describe an eclectic paradigm that combines features of critical, constructivist and action inquiry models. In the second section of the chapter, I will describe the strategy of investigation along with the information collection techniques and method of theory development that was employed to support the research paradigm.

3.1 The paradigm of research

3.1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to describe the philosophy that made it possible to investigate effectively the increasing involvement of the Aboriginal community in school decision-making processes at Warakurna. When I arrived in Warakurna in February 1991, I was directed by the district superintendent to implement an Education Department policy (School decision-making: Policy and Guidelines, 1990) that parents and the community should be involved in the decision-making processes of the school in order to develop a shared community-school ethos. I was encouraged to introduce parent and community participation in such a way that would recognise the unique nature of the school but remain consistent with the overall policy.

I initially approached the investigation therefore from the philosophical point of view that underpinned the Education Department policy on parent and community involvement in school decision-making (1990, p. 4). I also drew from my experiences in having worked as a teacher at Warakurna during the 1970s. These sources led me to two broad principles which guided the investigation from the start. The principles were:
1. Aboriginal people at Warakurna should have the opportunity to achieve genuine authority in school decision-making.

2. Aboriginal authority in school decision-making processes will assist community development by directing school priorities and objectives towards producing graduates whose learning and other behaviours match the needs of the community as those needs are properly expressed by the Yarnangu.

Based on the understandings that I had gained from my previous experience in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (Chapter One) and from the literature review (Chapter Two), I concluded that there was little history of active Aboriginal involvement in the senior levels of government school functioning in remote communities. I also judged that the tradition of the Warakurna school reflected largely non-Aboriginal values, beliefs and practices despite the existence of a few documents that promoted the notion of Aboriginal involvement. Any movement towards changing the decision-making structure of the school would therefore be steps of faith because it would involve introducing a philosophy of Aboriginal empowerment that was vague to the extent that it was not supported by any guaranteed methods of implementation. That is, it had not been done before in a situation without a significant number of qualified Aboriginal teachers on the staff.

The first step in the research process was to confirm the need for the investigation with the Yarnangu at Warakurna. Appropriate Yarnangu decision-makers (the 'old men') then drew up a list of criteria with which the research paradigm had to be consistent. The criteria governing the investigation included the following components:

1. Ultimate authority for the investigation had to rest with the Yarnangu. The process of the investigation and the subsequent use of findings would be under their control.

2. The study would aim at gaining an holistic understanding of relationships within the local social system.
3. The investigation had to collect information through a personal, face-to-face and immediate process. It was important to understand the meaning of participants' lives in the participants' own terms. That is, investigation had to attempt to understand the lived experience of Aboriginal people, their world view.

4. The study had to be confined to the specific cross-cultural context, set of issues and story.

5. A team of researchers had to act as the main research instruments even though they would bring their own biases and ideologies to their interactions with the research population. That is, meaning behind the action of all participants was seen to be important in the investigation.

6. There would be a need to intimately involve Aboriginal people as co-researchers in order to overcome language and other cultural barriers. There would also be a need to foster a genuine relationship based on trust and respect that was honest and non-coercive.

7. A considerable amount of time would have to be spent in the field with the Yar-nangu and an equal amount of time would need to be allocated to analysing the information that was collected.

8. Inquiry had to be open and democratic in that it could not function effectively according to predetermined directions or with restrictions imposed by the Walypala researcher.

9. Informed consent from participants and a way of responding to ethical concerns would need to be incorporated into the research design.

10. The study would be political in that it had to attempt to bring about changes to the way in which power was distributed between groups of people in the community, particularly in relation to the school.
11. An important aim of the investigation into change within the school would be the production of knowledge and methods of strategic action that would be directly useful in helping the Aboriginal people of Warakurna to fulfil their wider aspirations.

12. Inquiry would be an ongoing process, not concluding at the end of the study.

These criteria clearly indicated that a mix of critical, constructivist and action-oriented research models would embrace the subjective realities of individuals as well as recommend strategic action to help achieve the objectives of the community.

3.1.2 Critical theory

Kemmis and Carr (1983), Giroux (1988), Marsh (1992), Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) claim that critical theory finds its value in studies where the aim is to encourage critique and action in order to address historic and structural social problems that are associated with the exploitation of people. Critical inquiry brings about social transformation through confrontation, conflict, advocacy, struggle and activism because previously enshrined and unchallengeable structures and processes are made truly problematic and replaced with undecidability and constructivism (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994, p. 146). Giroux (1988, p. 213) confirms this perspective by claiming that critical theory attempts to "uncover and excavate those forms of historical and subjugated knowledge that point to experiences of suffering, conflict, and collective struggle ... [and] ... link the notion of historical understanding to elements of critique and hope". Collins (1992, p. 75), Welch (1992, pp. 62-64), Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 14) and Olesen (1994, p. 164) suggest that critical theory is able to examine local structures of domination in terms of how race, class and gender are produced and enacted in historically specific situations.

The ontology of critical theory is material-realistic in that history is seen to have shaped the factors that have allowed the creation and renewal of structures that are seen by human beings as natural and immutable (historical realism). It believes that the real world makes a material differ-
ence to people in terms of race, class, history, kinship, spirituality, power and gender. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 100) describe the epistemology of critical theory as subjectivist and transactional. Critical theory perceives ‘truth’ as illusionary and requires that both the investigator and those under investigation are interactively connected such that their values become intertwined. In order that the understandings gained from the investigation have credibility and authenticity, both researcher and researched must share a ‘critical trustworthiness’; that is, they must be able to critique one another’s ideas and actions openly and with good faith (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994, p. 151). As far as possible, control of the study should be genuinely shared with no fear of coercion so that the prejudices and values of each group are equally at risk. Welch (1992, p. 76) argues that “In this form of interaction, there are no privileged epistemological or cultural positions, there are just forms-of-life, or language games”. In this way it becomes a truly democratic process.

The methodology of critical theory is naturalistic, using ethnographic techniques such as discourse analysis, interviews, and a focus on the personal stories from the participants own lives. Throughout the research process, critical theory emphasises dialogue in a dialectic between researcher and researched so that they contribute equally to a mutually evolving informed consciousness (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 85). In this way, people’s preconceived and historically derived perceptions of human relationships are constantly revised.

Looking at the usefulness of critical theory to the study at Warakurna, part of the purpose of the research was to investigate the historic structures that governed the nature and extent of Yarnangu participation in the Walypala-dominated school and community. This meant that long-standing dominant beliefs, theories and values of schooling had to be made problematic and subject to critique within a political perspective (Kemmis and Carr, 1983, p. 136). At the same time, the Yarnangu community had to be given the power to express itself in its own terms in collaboration with Walypala personnel. A situation of mutual understanding and genuine partnership between the researcher and those under investigation was not easy to achieve because the history of cultural oppression and social irrelevancy had frequently seen the Yarnangu become the ‘objects’ of study rather than participants and ‘owners’. That is, because the Yar-
nangu had traditionally been denied any involvement in the process of decision-making by the State, such as in schooling, it was difficult to overcome the structural and ideological barriers to obtaining the emic (inside) views through dialectic interaction. To help counter this problem, critical theory advocates “the idea of self-reflection guided by an emancipatory interest ... which exposes the powerful tendencies to suppress practical discourse and force all rationality into the form of instrumental reason” (Kemmis and Carr, 1983, p. 147). The notion of critical self-reflection was employed during the investigation, particularly in ensuring that the Yarnangu were able to maintain control over the philosophy and practice of the investigation.

The use of critical theory did not by itself provide much assistance in suggesting practical ways of moving beyond creating enlightenment. That is, it did not suggest praxis: the use of newly constructed knowledge in social action (Kemmis and Carr, 1983, p. 148). A methodology that contained significant elements of this philosophy had to be employed in order to facilitate the process of change. Other issues that had to be considered when employing the critical paradigm included:

1. The need to avoid bias that could come from insufficient reflexivity (the ability to respond to the findings that emerged from the study at various times).

2. The need to maintain adequacy and credibility by triangulating information with other sources (primary and secondary).

3. The need to keep the Yarnangu fully informed and involved in all stages of the investigation.

In section 3.1.4, I will suggest a theory of action that incorporates many of the elements of critical theory but also provides a means by which strategic action can be generated.
3.1.3 Constructivist approaches

In the view of Schwandt (1994, p. 123), advocates of constructivist approaches believe that society is constructed out of events and phenomena through prolonged processes of social interaction between history, culture, language and action. Like critical theory, the aim of constructivism is to produce reconstructed understandings where societal transformation occurs as a result of the interpretation of information that is historically situated (Cleary, 1992, p. 130). Constructions are dependent for their form and content on the respondents (individuals and/or groups) who hold the constructions. Constructions are not more or less ‘true’, but are simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 111) the ontology of constructivism is relativist. That is, there are multiple realities constructed by individuals and groups and they are often intangible and socially based in a specific location although some elements may be shared among many individuals and even across cultures. The key feature of constructivist research is that findings are subjectively created as an investigation proceeds. Findings emerge or are literally created as the point of view of the respondents is captured during an investigation. The methodology of constructivism is naturalistic and varies according to each situation (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 277). Constructivism, like critical theory, embraces methods that encourage dialogue that is dialectic in nature. “The act of inquiry begins with issues and/or concerns of participants and unfolds through a dialectic of interaction, analysis, reiteration and reanalysis ... that leads eventually to a joint construction of a case [between inquirer and respondents]” (Schwandt, 1994, pp. 128-129). “The inquirer is cast in the role of participant and facilitator in this process” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 113) providing expertise and competence during the investigation. The inquiry methodology must “attend to both the inquirer’s own self-reflective awareness of his or her own constructions and to the social construction of individual constructions (including that of the inquirer)” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 128).

The result of an investigation sees constructions form about which there is a consensus among those who are competent to interpret the construction (those who form the population under
investigation). The constructions should be more informed and sophisticated than any prior constructions because the range and scope of information available to a researcher will improve in quality as the cycles of inquiry proceed. In this process, contradictions and inconsistencies are exposed and the constructions become self-revising (Cleary, 1992, p. 130).

A major shortcoming with constructivist theory is the lack of critique of the process and findings of researchers and respondents. As a result, constructions may be formed according to a faulty criterion and so lead to an incorrect interpretation of reality. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.113) state, for example, that “some critics have faulted [constructivist theory] on the grounds that it expands the inquirer’s role beyond reasonable expectations of expertise and competence”. A further aspect of the lack of critique is that findings need only be confirmed by those who are considered to be competent to interpret particular constructions, members of the population under investigation. That is, there is no need for validation of findings apart from the perspective of the participants.

Ways for overcoming this tendency to parochialism in constructivist-based research include: involving participants from all sections of the community in the process; collecting large amounts of data from a variety of sources and ensuring the findings are limited to those aspects where there is convergence of meaning; engaging multiple researchers and using secondary informants for corroboration of the findings and exploring relevant academic literature for corroboration or disconfirmation of the findings. The implementation of such rigour may increase the likelihood that findings will clearly represent the reality of a situation and so indicate sound directions for future action. Another shortcoming with constructivist theory is that it seeks to understand what respondents are doing but does not attempt to recommend praxis (informed and committed action). Therefore, while theory may emerge that describes the meanings behind individual or group action in a particular situation, there may be no movement towards action to improve a social reality.

In regard to the investigation at Warakurna, constructivist theory was useful in that it commenced with the presupposition that knowledge and truth are social constructs and not objective
realities that cannot be challenged. In a situation where Aboriginal people had traditionally been treated as a marginalised class with little authority or power to control their own decision-making processes, constructivism allowed the researcher to demystify the 'facts' regarding Aboriginal people and their relationship with the non-Aboriginal culture. It particularly allowed for power relations to be viewed as problematic and so encouraged the development of an appetite for social transformation according to a new rationality. A second value of constructivism in this investigation was that the findings of the research had to fit with the experience of the local Aboriginal community if they were to be a description of a new reality. The possibility of an investigation being dominated by non-Aboriginal rationality and presuppositions (Marcus and Fischer, 1986) was minimised and the chance of Aboriginal-controlled social action was increased.

In conclusion, constructivist theory assisted this investigation by promoting the authority of Aboriginal people within the research process as well as describing the changing reality of school-community relations from the perspective of the community. It was important, however, that a research paradigm be employed that would not only accurately describe a changing reality but also suggest the sort of social action that would enable the Aboriginal community to plan strategies towards achieving the objective of participating effectively in a school decision-making partnership with the non-Aboriginal teachers.

3.1.4 Action inquiry

Theories of action inquiry (action theory) attempt to build transformational action into an emancipatory critical paradigm. The objective of theories of action is the "enlightenment and awakening of common peoples" and the "transformation of organisations and communities into collaborative, self-reflective communities of inquiry" (Reason, 1994, pp. 328-330). The result is "improving the rationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the situations in which the practices are carried out" (Kemmis and Carr, 1983, p. 152; also Elliott, 1991, p. 50).
Marsh (1991, p. 141) believes that the strength of action theory is that it “aims not just at knowledge and understanding but at putting inquiry at the service of action”. Elliott (1991, p. 49) similarly states that the strength of action inquiry is that it attempts “to improve practice rather than produce knowledge”. Action inquiry involves various participants working collaboratively on felt needs as well as planning and executing procedures to overcome their problems and bring about worthwhile change. There are no experts in conducting this form of inquiry other than the participants in the action.

The ontology of action theory is relativist also. It looks at how people perceive concrete facts and things. That is, a connection is made between subjectivity and objectivity. It must be noted, however, that action theory describes a person’s objectivity according to the nature and content of personal categories that are based upon rationality, facts, practices, and objects according to the participants’ interpretation of their life world (Tripp, 1983, p. 16; Nias, 1987, p. 47). The epistemology of action theories emphasises the value of actual experience in developing knowledge. Truth is discovered mainly through discourse that occurs when what was previously seen to be a norm of behaviour or an element within an objective category has broken down and new ‘truth claims’ need to be considered. In order for discourse to be effective, however, those engaging in the process must be self-reflexive. That is, the discourse that helps to provide a descriptive account of a situation must be simultaneously shaped by the situation that it is describing and, in the same way, participants (researcher and respondents) must also be influenced by the setting.

Action theory promotes critical subjectivity in an open and democratic environment in order to bring about informed and committed action that will be of value to the community. The methodology of action inquiry stresses the need for group skills such as cooperation, reflection and collaboration in order to create effective discourse. It also requires a general willingness of individuals to participate in planned action. Action inquiry encourages experimentation and risk taking with respondents also being the inquirers.

Reason (1994, p. 330) suggests that the practice of action theory requires participants to explore
“four territories of consciousness” that will “identify and expose those aspects of the existing social order which frustrate rational change, and ... offer accounts which enable [participants] to become aware of how they may be overcome” (Kemmis and Carr, 1983, p. 158). Reason’s (1994, p. 330) four territories of consciousness are:

1. Knowledge about the purposes of the system that is under review.

2. Knowledge about the system’s strategies that have historically ensured its survival and renewal.

3. Knowledge of behavioural choices when planning action to change the system and its processes.

4. Knowledge of the outside world and its influence on the choices that participants make.

The result of an examination of the four territories of consciousness is the development of personal and objective knowledge in participants which is useful when they make the judgments that are intended to drive action in particular directions. The exploration will ensure the collection of valid information and also provide participants with the opportunity to make free and informed choices and embark upon what they see as rational strategic action in order to bring about beneficial change. Practical action involves risks, however, because there is no theory principle that can justify or guarantee a particular action. Action can only be explained retrospectively by reference to the practical judgment of the participant as well as the circumstances and determinants that contextualised the action. The result of a retrospective analysis of the effectiveness of action is that a participant’s personal objective knowledge becomes more authentic (Kemmis and Carr, 1983, p. 162).

From authentic knowledge, local or grounded theories may develop (Tripp, 1983, p. 6; Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 273-285). These theories explain local action for particular individuals
and in specific social situations. The veracity of local theories depends on the authenticity of knowledge. This knowledge is assessed by the participants in an investigation because it is they who must be the final arbiter in terms of whether an action has been successful or not and how ‘truth’ may be defined. That is, ‘truth’ is ultimately an individual and not a collective construct and all other interpretations must be seen in the light of personal knowledge. This is not to diminish the notion of collective action, however, because political activity as a commitment by co-participants to a course of action is a cornerstone of action theory. It is simply intertwined with individual self-reflection on the effectiveness of action and how ‘truth’ may be reconstituted.

The action inquiry theory was very valuable in supporting the investigation at Warakurna because it possessed the following strengths:

1. It encouraged an examination of issues and situations in a way that was not influenced by the historically dominant, externally based, non-Aboriginal research processes and individuals.

2. It intimately involved all participants in the research process in a genuine and democratic way. In this way, the ‘voices’ of local Aboriginal people had great significance.

3. There was a vital link between gaining an understanding of a particular social setting and the movement towards practical social change.

4. The value of the research site as a unique setting was highlighted. Therefore, the task of conducting an investigation in order to build generalisations across communities was not as important as producing locally significant knowledge that could facilitate effective social change.

5. Recognition was made of political and social criticism, the personal values and ideologies of the participants, the role of the researcher as part of the community under investi-
igation, a cycle of strategic action followed by reflection as a precursor to further planning, a dialectic form of dialogue, and accountability to the local community at all stages of the inquiry.

In conclusion, action theory embraced a number of the strengths that supported the study at Warakurna and suggested strategies for change within the community.

3.1.5 The paradigm of inquiry employed at Warakurna

This review of the paradigms of research that assisted in clarifying the philosophy of the investigation at Warakurna found that the strengths of the critical, constructivist and action inquiry traditions maximised the effectiveness of the investigation. It is appropriate therefore to refer to the paradigm as an eclectic design.

The features of the paradigm satisfied the conditions set by the community described in section 3.1.1 particularly in that it was holistic, naturalistic, employed a multi-method approach, highlighted the significance of the local situation, and led towards praxis. The paradigm was also democratic in that it gave equal status to the ideology and truth constructions of all participants and encouraged a community-wide spirit of self-reflection and critique through dialectical interaction.

Table 3.1 summarises the characteristics of the paradigms that have been reviewed in this section in terms of their ontology, epistemology and methodology. Table 3.2 analyses the paradigms in terms of how they address certain important research questions.

In the next section of this chapter, I will examine the research strategies and associated information collection techniques that were used at Warakurna to support the strengths of the eclectic paradigm. I will also describe the process that was used to construct theory.
Table 3.1

Characteristics of paradigms of research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>ACTION INQUIRY</th>
<th>CRITICAL THEORY</th>
<th>CONSTRUCTIVISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>relativism - reality locally constructed in the light of historical and structural factors</td>
<td>historical realism - virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values; crystallised over time</td>
<td>relativism - local and specific constructed realities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>transactional/subjectivist, findings emerge from action</td>
<td>transactional/subjectivist value-mediated findings (values of participants affecting findings)</td>
<td>transactional/subjectivist; findings are created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>group action the result of reflection and redefined following further reflection</td>
<td>dialogic/dialectical</td>
<td>hermeneutical/dialectical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.2
How four paradigms of research answer important research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>ACTION INQUIRY</th>
<th>CRITICAL THEORY</th>
<th>CONSTRUCTIVISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry aims</td>
<td>praxis - strategic action to address needs</td>
<td>critique transformation; restitution and emancipation</td>
<td>understanding; reconstruction through consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of knowledge</td>
<td>historical/institutional insights from individual and group</td>
<td>structural/historical insights coalescing around consensus</td>
<td>individual reconstructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reconstructions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge accumulation</td>
<td>reflection upon the results of strategic action</td>
<td>historic revisionism; generalisation by similarity</td>
<td>more informed and sophisticated reconstructions; vicarious experience; multiple knowledge; constant revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality criteria</td>
<td>cyclical reflection, use of multiple voices, stimulus for</td>
<td>historic situatedness; erosion of ignorance; action stimulus</td>
<td>trustworthiness, authenticity; misapprehensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improved action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>included - formative</td>
<td>included - formative</td>
<td>included - formative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>intrinsic; tilt towards revelation</td>
<td>intrinsic; tilt towards revelation</td>
<td>intrinsic - tilt towards revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>facilitator of multiple voices; advocate of group action</td>
<td>transformative intellectual as advocate or activist</td>
<td>'passionate participant' as facilitator of multiple voices reconstruction (advocacy/activism)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Development of a methodology of inquiry

In the previous section, I described the paradigm that would support the objectives of the investigation at Warakurna and satisfy the criteria laid down by the Yarnangu community. I concluded that an eclectic model that drew from the critical, constructivist and action inquiry traditions would be valuable. The paradigm fulfilled two essential elements that were associated with the objective of the investigation. First, it described and theorised systems, processes and phenomena that were observed at Warakurna on various occasions and, second, it recommended praxis and provided a way of managing strategic change.

It is the purpose of this section to describe the research strategies that were employed and were consistent with the philosophical perspective in describing a situation and in recommending action. It is also an objective of this section to detail the process of information collection that was followed in the investigation. Table 3.3 summarises the strategies of research in terms of the types of questions that they answered as part of the inquiry.

There were three closely related strategies that were employed to conduct the investigation. The first was participant action research which promoted the value of data collection with the objective of recommending action. The second was ethnography (including ethnomethodology and phenomenology) which helped to describe events and phenomena in a systematic and formal way and was flexible enough to embrace a critical action perspective. The final strategy was to adopt case study methods which assisted in focussing research on describing specific aspects of the situation in which change was occurring.

3.2.1 Participant action research (PAR)

According to Reason (1994, p. 328) the philosophy of participant action research emphasises:

concerns for the poor and powerless, and aims to confront the way in which the established and power holding elements of societies worldwide are favoured because they hold a monopoly on the definition and employment of knowledge.
Table 3.3
Strategies for research at Warakurna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of investigation</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning behind experiences</td>
<td>phenomenology</td>
<td>audio tape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ethnography</td>
<td>written anecdotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>case study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of values &amp; attitudes</td>
<td>ethnography</td>
<td>unstructured interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of a cultural group</td>
<td></td>
<td>participant observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>field notes (journal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process questions - experience</td>
<td>ethnography</td>
<td>interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over time or change</td>
<td>case study</td>
<td>professional journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural questions</td>
<td>participant observ-</td>
<td>observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ation</td>
<td>field notes (journal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal interaction &amp; dialogue</td>
<td>ethnography</td>
<td>dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ethnomethodology</td>
<td>observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ethnography</td>
<td>field notes (journal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PAR concerns itself with the lived experience of people and the idea that through the actual experience of something, we may “intuitively apprehend its essence; we feel, enjoy and understand it as reality” (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991, p. 4). PAR is premised therefore on the need for the inquirer to have a close and equal relationship with respondents and aims at causing “consciousness-raising, emotional catharsis, and increased politicization and activism” (Punch, 1994, p. 85). As Tripp states (1987, p. 14), participant action research is a process of conscious engagement where the taken for granted or ‘lived’ values of an individual become problematic.
Punch (1994, p. 84) maintains that the PAR strategy "involves the researcher in prolonged immersion in the life of a group, community, or organisation in order to discern people’s habits and thoughts as well as to decipher the social structure that binds them together". The philosophy of PAR is that people are self-determining and are the authors of their own actions (thinking and decision-making) (Tripp, 1989, p. 15). They must therefore ‘own’ the elements of social change if they are to carry them out. In that way inquirers and respondents are viewed as co-researchers as well as co-subjects operating within a very close relationship. True reciprocity is a feature of PAR. This means that there must be a full exchange of ideas and actions between all participants in an inquiry as well as the expression of personal perceptions in order to ensure that a mutual understanding of the realities perceived by all participants is achieved. As a result of reaching consensus, it is reasonable to expect that there will be an active involvement in social change by all of the participants.

As already mentioned, PAR involves all participants as co-researchers in varying ways. When the research population is large, it is necessary to ensure that a process is established where all sections of the respondent population have representation on some sort of research group and can make input into the directions of social change through that group. In order to achieve authentic knowledge in an investigation, however, the relationship between the representative group and other participants must be intimate, with a special kind of reciprocal communication employed that can register all points of view and engage everyone in practical and political deliberation (Nias, 1987, p. 20).

Kemmis and Carr (1983, pp. 173-177) describe two forms of PAR that were of relevance to the investigation at Warakurna. Called practical action research, the first type of PAR saw responsibility for change rest primarily with the individual and did not necessarily result in any change for the group. A researcher tended to be a facilitator or consultant but was otherwise not involved in the praxis. A parent acting to bring about change in the behaviour of a substance-abusing son following consultation with a researcher is an example of practical action that occurred at Warakurna during the time of the investigation (see section 4.3.3).
The second type of PAR employed at Warakurna was collaborative action between group members who had joint responsibility for action, reflection and moderation. Referred to as emancipatory action research, groups were established with the purpose of freeing their members from what they saw as unjust practices, irrational change, bureaucratic systematisation, or coercion. Group responsibility governed the planning and monitoring of strategic action as well as monitoring the action and critical reflection upon the processes and consequences. As an example of emancipatory action, some of the Walypala formed alliances to resist changes that saw the Yarnangu assume more responsibility within the community. Similarly, members of the Yarnangu community worked as a unit to free themselves from what they viewed as the long-standing unjust practices of the Walypala towards them. Both types of PAR often functioned at the same time.

PAR employs a wide variety of information-gathering techniques such as observations, interviews and meetings, professional journals and other processes normally associated with a critical and post modern paradigm of research (Elliott, 1991, p. 64). While some of these techniques will be reviewed shortly, what is distinctive about participative action research is the process of continual self-reflection. That is, a cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting is repeated in a spiralling form of improvement during an investigation. This cycle was an important feature of the investigation at Warakurna because it helped to integrate and interpret the information that was collected.

Professional journals brought together many features of the critical action oriented philosophy. Tripp (1987, pp. 10-12) writes that professional journals are a valuable part of the information collection process within a critical paradigm because they document and theorise routine practice in such a way that describes the values that underpin personal behaviour. Journals also work to develop categories of the typical activities of individuals which can then be used to form generalisations or grounded theories of practice.

Professional journals are more than systematic diaries of events. According to Tripp (1987, pp. 10-28) the features of the journal are that they:
1. Employ a transactional and analytic form of writing.

2. Reflect what has been observed and thought as well as providing a record of the ideas that have been explored over time.

3. Record the process of self-reflection and personal challenge to previously enshrined beliefs, values, attitudes and practices in order to improve behaviour.

4. Illustrate personal and group misunderstandings and ignorance.

5. Develop grounded theories that help explain events for particular individuals and particular situations.

In summary, professional journals are "a participant's subjective account, and in naturalistic research it is essential ... to accept their commentaries upon their actions as authentic, though revisable, reports of phenomena, subject to empirical criticism" (Tripp, 1987, p. 31). This point shows that the technique of keeping a professional journal is located firmly within the critical, constructivist and action inquiry paradigms of research.

All researchers at Warakurna kept careful journals in order to reflect daily practice, to critique various events and settings and to devise locally relevant theories. The journals were a valuable source of information because they helped to uncover hidden or taken-for-granted practices and beliefs that were the catalyst for many of the responses made by the Yarnangu and the Walypala in response to the prospect or actuality of change. The journals also helped to describe the social context (including values, attitudes and practices) within which a number of critical events occurred and so placed those events into a particular perspective.

Observation techniques were employed to help research participants describe the reality and 'truth' of various situations in their journals. Participants, however, were also involved in the setting's central activities, they assumed responsibilities that helped advance the group and were
fully committed to the members' values and goals. Adler and Adler (1994, p. 380) refer to this type of observation as a "complete membership role". They believe that the validity and reliability of observations that find their way into professional journals can be ensured by the use of multiple checkers, the search for evidence to disprove or corroborate information, repetition of observations, and observers writing close to the subject's world.

An example of the role of professional journals in creating the social tapestry in which more significant events can find meaning from the perspective of all of the participants is shown in the following selection of extracts from the journals that were kept by investigators during the inquiry at Warakurna. The extracts briefly portray some of the events that led to the Yarnangu community taking control of the shop and are taken from the journals kept by three researchers.

My wife (Walypala female) got thrown out of the shop yesterday afternoon by the shop keeper. She was accused of sitting on her bottom until it was late and then making her [the Walypala shop keeper] keep the shop open too long. A number of other abuses were hurled at her and so she left. She was upset enough to cry over it. Later on, the Yarnangu assistant in the shop came over to apologise. When I relayed the incident to the Aboriginal Education Workers, they gave me accounts of their own experiences at the hands of the shopkeeper (7 September 1992).

Mrs Reid (Yarnangu female) was poked in the face in the shop by the shop keeper this morning. The shop keeper was using a battery-operated cattle prod to move the ladies along. Mrs Reid and her family then hit the shop keeper with pieces of thin wire that are normally used for story telling. The shop keeper is now threatening to call the police and lay charges. Mrs Reid has burn marks on her face (15 September 1992).

When 'A' (Yarnangu female) was interviewed, she stated that, "White people talk about the lazy Aborigine but you'd be lazy too if your only job in the shop was picking up paper, dusting shelves or [doing] other menial jobs" (9 October 1992).

An interview with Joma (Yarnangu female) made it clear that the shop and office would not train them [older students in the school] to do anything. "At Wingellina the Anangu look after the till, they count the money, safe it, and bank it. Here they sweep the floors and stock the shelves. The ladies aren't trusted. No one will give them real jobs" (13 October 1992).

I found out from an angry Yarnangu mother this morning that her son, who was on work experience organised by the school, did not go to an outstation to learn how to repair windmills at all, but was used by the shopkeeper to stack shelves and move goods from the store shed. He came back to school this afternoon. It [the work experience] was a flop and made the Yarnangu very angry. I am very cross too (6 November 1992).

There appears to be a rationalising process occurring within the community where Abor-
original people have to accept tokenism as the extent of their involvement and authority in the shop. The Yarnangu have very little to do in the shop and their jobs are menial and lacking in responsibility (comment by Heslop, 21 November 1992).

It is impossible to catch the shop open at the moment unless you are standing outside waiting for the shop keeper to open up. In the heat we have had lately, no one can stand around outside for too long. Yesterday, my teachers were told to leave the shop by the shop keeper because it was being closed. As a result, they could not buy their tea. What does it all mean? It means that we [the Walypala teachers] have had a brief encounter with what the Yarnangu have to put up with all of the time. We have an advisor who does not appear to be able to cope with the work, who won't delegate responsibility to the Yarnangu (almost as if he is frightened of them), and who treats us [Walypala and Yarnangu] in a paternalistic manner (30 November 1992).

Letters arrived today from the Ngaanyatjarra Council outlining complaints that have been received from the Yarnangu about the high prices in the shop and the lack of consultation regarding the building of the swimming pool. [The Walypala shop keeper] immediately announced her resignation and refused to open the shop. She locked herself in the store and proceeded to do a stock take. According to the health sister, who was worried about her mental health, the shop keeper's perspective is one of, "all the things I've done for this place, they now want to get rid of me" (1 December 1992).

The children were very naughty at school today, possibly because they are hungry, but the community is very angry that the shop is not being opened by the shop keeper. The shop keeper does not feel as though she can trust anyone in the store and so the 'employee' has become the 'employer' in terms of how power is distributed between the Walypala and the Yarnangu (6 December 1992).

Jorna (a Yarnangu lady who is now the acting store keeper) collected the keys from 'An_' [the Walypala shop keeper] this morning and proceeded to order stock for Christmas. She had to get the Ngaanyatjarra Council coordinator to phone 'An_' first, however, and instruct her to release the store keys to Jorna. 'An_' came to my house and accused me of undermining all that she had done in the community over the past three years and in stirring up trouble for her and her husband (the Walypala advisor). She broke down a number of times and said that she was "over the edge already" but that she was "going to get the people who organised for the letter from the Ngaan. Council to be written" (14 December 1992).

The Walypala female shop keeper wants to have a Yarnangu person take on responsible roles like working the till and doing the admin. But she stated that this sort of responsibility can only be taken on by Aborigines who "are a little bit further down the track in their development" (4 May 1993).

If the history of the interaction between the Walypala shop keeper and the Yarnangu community had not been documented from the perspective of all of the key participants over a reasonably long period of time, specific incidents may have been viewed in a superficial way and so the authentic truth and reality about the shop may not have emerged. From the example of the journal extracts, it is possible to see some of the features of professional journals that are listed above:
1. The emergence of localised or grounded theories regarding the characteristics of some non-Aboriginal people and the level of development of Aboriginal people at Warakurna according to the perception of particular individuals (see section 3.8 for a review of theory development).

2. An attempt to analyse the meaning behind certain situations such as the crisis in the shop at the time of the resignation of the shop keeper.

3. The recording of actual incidents over time and an attempt to interpret them as can be seen in why the shop keeper would not allow Aboriginal people to take on responsibility in the store and why she treated them so badly.

4. Efforts to highlight misunderstandings, and ignorance of various issues such as the mistrust felt by certain Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people at Warakurna towards one another and the lack of communication between them.

Another important aspect of the data collection process that was valuable in articulating the philosophy of the investigation at Warakurna was the use of genuine and democratic oral discourse; formal interviews and informal discussions between co-researchers/co-respondents. As will also be shown in section 3.5, the Yarnangu preferred to share knowledge in a spontaneous verbal way and in a location where they felt most comfortable, usually outside. The recording of these discussions was primarily done in writing (sometimes immediately after the event) but a number of meetings were recorded on cassette or in art (paintings or sand drawing). The value of discourse in this investigation was that it was consistent with the research paradigm that emerged from a combination of critical, constructivist and action inquiry theories.

A key aspect of discourse strategy is the interview. The interview is an interplay between listening and questioning but where the "interviewer attempts to create the reality of the interview situation" (Reason, 1994, p. 353). That is, there is a desire to understand the research setting including the culture of the respondents. To ensure that interviews are of value to an investiga-
tion, the researcher must locate the most appropriate respondents and behave in a genuine way.

Within the context of the paradigm that was adopted for this investigation, interviews were conducted in the following ways:

1. They were unstructured in that no specific questions were predetermined.

2. Efforts were made to minimise the role of the interviewer in the process, and the impact of gender and race was recognised by respondents being interviewed by people of the same gender and race. That is, women were interviewed by women and men were interviewed by men. Similarly, Aboriginal people were interviewed by other Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people were interviewed by other non-Aboriginal people. In both contexts, however, a member of the other race was normally present because of the demands of triangulation (see section 3.3).

3. They were often conducted outside in an environment that was familiar to the participants.

4. Aboriginal people were interviewed in Ngaanyatjarra if they felt more comfortable speaking in the vernacular.

5. Aboriginal respondents were encouraged to draw or paint their opinions as a way of clarifying their feelings.

The format of the interview process was particularly important when interviewing older Aboriginal people who could speak very little English, felt uneasy when away from their familiar circumstances, needed time to be able to articulate themselves, combined art with discussion, but whose point of view was essential in determining the success of any change initiatives.

Other aspects of the discourse strategy used at Warakurna included parent and community meet-
ings and workshops and formal interviews where questions were decided beforehand. These will be described in more detail in section 3.3.

3.2.2 Ethnography

According to Harper (1994, p. 407) ethnography "is most usefully thought of as a created tale that comes a lot closer to describing reality". It draws upon the narrative and "includes the point of view, voice and experience of the author, and experiments with ways of telling". Zetlin and Harris (1992, p. 82) add that "ethnography is an important research strategy for understanding the complexity of the psychosocial and cultural forces at work in the setting being studied as well as for preserving chronological flow". Wiersma (1991, pp. 218-243) and Atkinson and Hammersley (1994, p. 258) state that ethnography emphasises the following features:

1. Exploration of the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test particular hypotheses about them (naturalistic inquiry).

2. The use of unstructured data in that it is not coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories.

3. Investigation of a small number of cases.

4. Analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations.

5. The emergence of grounded theory through the process of induction.

6. Concentration on the holistic context in which events occur.

7. Use of modern data collection techniques such as video taping and photography.
8. The availability of data to other researchers for secondary analysis.

In regard to the investigation at Warakurna, the strengths of ethnography were that it viewed the inquirer as being part of the natural setting. Context and culture were examined, self reflection and interpretation (social critique) were emphasised, and a focus was placed on what people said and did in interaction with one another. Moreover, with all participants being immersed in the culture, it was important that they possessed equal power and were able to create a rhetoric that was egalitarian. Traditional rationality was replaced with undecidability (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994, p. 146) and long-standing reality was suspended and replaced with constructivism where reality was a social construct that could be revised.

Ethnography is very closely related to the strategies of ethnomethodology and phenomenology. For the purposes of this investigation, the strengths of ethnomethodology and phenomenology were integrated into a strategy that I will refer to as ethnography to the extent that they emphasised knowledge as being situated in the local culture and embedded in specific organisational sites.

3.2.3 Case study

Stake (1994, p. 240) writes that the case study strategy of investigation is most useful when the reason for the study is intrinsic (as defined below); when the objective of investigation is to achieve a better understanding of a particular area or phenomena. Case study seeks to understand a single, unique and bounded case. While it does not attempt to produce grand theory, naturalistic generalisations may develop (Stake, 1994, pp. 238-242).

Their [the researchers’] intrinsic case study designs draw the researcher towards an understanding of what is important about that case within its own world, not so much the world of researchers and theorists, but developing its issues, contexts and interpretations.

Case study seeks out emic meanings, that is, meanings that are held by the people involved in the particular case, and looks for patterns in the data to develop various issues. As a result, case
study evolves in the act of writing itself. Triangulation is employed in order to bring multiple perspectives to a study and so help to clarify meaning and verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation.

Because many of the cases that are placed under examination are embedded within structures and systems that are supported by the traditional and dominant power bases, the main technique of information collection is critical reflective observation. This method promotes the development of alternative interpretations although Giroux (in Smyth, 1987, p. 13) warns that "A reflective approach suffers the defect of being trapped by what it ignores". The professional journal may be used to record observations as vignettes and suggest tentative assertions (Deakin University, 1983, p. 330). Various forms of discourse are another source of information that need to be collected. They can be recorded from interviews, meetings and informal discussions in journals or on video or audio tapes. Triangulation processes such as the use of a number of investigators and a variety of information collection techniques assist in validating the interpretations that emerge from the data.

The investigation at Warakurna involved placing one situation (the change process within the school) in one community under close scrutiny. The case study approach therefore, appeared to be an appropriate strategy to apply to the investigation. The following components of data that had to be collected at Warakurna were consistent with the elements of case study data as described by Stake (1994, p. 238):

1. Nature of the case

2. Historical setting

3. Physical setting

4. Other contexts such as political, legal and aesthetic
5. Other cases through which this case is recognised

6. Informants through which the case can be known.

The case study strategy suited some aspects of the eclectic paradigm under which the research was conducted. It emphasised the subjectivity of knowledge and that ‘truth’ is a socially constructed notion within a locality. Moreover, the case study promoted the importance of individual values, ideology and purpose when examining concrete situations. Finally, the holistic nature of case study was helpful in the investigation in that it was able to collect information from a wide variety of areas (political, aesthetic, economic and cultural).

An important weakness with the case study approach is that the observer must keep a considerable distance from the situation under investigation. Deakin University (1983, p. 346) refers to the observer as “a stranger to the situation”. The advantage to the inquirer being somewhat remote from the setting is that “the stranger notices phenomena that the participants have long ago accepted and no longer consciously considers”. The research at Warakurna, however, was conducted with a number of investigators being actively involved in events and employing the skills of self and group reflection in order to examine all of the phenomena that existed in the situation under observation. The need to distance the inquirers from the setting therefore meant that case study was limited in its suitability at Warakurna because it was possible that the method would ignore the values, attitudes and perspectives of some of the participants.

3.3 The process of information collection at Warakurna

The strategy of inquiry was an integrated process in which procedures from participant action research, ethnography and case study were carried out concurrently (see Figure 3.1). The research process included a number of phases (see Table 3.4). The nature and order of phases three to six below was the result of discussions with members of the community on how the study should be undertaken in order to obtain the most useful findings. The main aim in instituting these phases was to ensure that the criteria of research decided upon by the Yarrangu
were observed and that the paradigm of research could be implemented most effectively.

3.3.1 Phase one - School awareness

In line with the critical action inquiry paradigm that was adopted for this investigation, shortly after my arrival in Warakurna I shared my research proposal with the Yarnangu employees in the school: Beryl Jennings, Dianne Holland and Bernard Newberry. I also presented my ideas to the three Walypula teachers. After a few weeks of questioning by the Yarnangu employees, mainly Bernard Newberry, I asked whether they felt that the proposal was worth presenting to the community as a whole and whether the community was likely to give it favourable consideration. The response I received was that the idea had merit. Bernard Newberry mentioned that my beliefs described in section 3.1.1 concerning the need for Aboriginal involvement in school decision-making processes were consistent with the aspirations of the Yarnangu to assume more control over community functions. Chapter Four develops the nature of these early discussions.

3.3.2 Phase two - Community awareness

Following the favourable response to the research topic from the Yarnangu school employees, I asked the community chairperson for approval to speak at the next community meeting and described to him what I wished to talk about. In agreeing to my request, he replied that he had already heard about the research proposal and that “some men are talking about it now” (journal entry, 6 March 1992, p. 10).

At the community meeting (10 March 1992), I spoke for a few minutes about the purpose of the research, but no one asked any questions and there was only limited discussion. Subsequently, a small group of ‘old men’, which included Bernard Newberry, approached me (26 March 1992) and said that I could go ahead with the study as long as Bernard helped me (journal entry, 26 March 1995, p. 18). The men also provided a list of criteria that would have to be included into the philosophy of the investigation if the inquiry was going to be effectively employed (see section 3.1.1). They particularly stressed that no one, especially Walypula, was
to have access to the information unless Bernard gave permission. This was because some Walypala researchers had let them down a few years beforehand by publishing what the community saw as confidential information. Finally, the men said that the research had to benefit the community and not just me and, if they felt that the investigation was not proceeding in a way that they saw as satisfactory, then they would "turn their backs on it and let it finish off".

3.3.3 Phase three - The growth of the Reference Group

The next phase in the study was the development of a genuine personal and professional relationship with Bernard Newberry as my fellow researcher. We worked as joint researchers for most of 1992, but Bernard felt that the study would have more value and validity if it included representatives of the other family groups in the community. As a result of his concern, Bruce Smith, Ivan Shepherd and Garry Stevens were appointed by the community to help in the study (November 1992) and so a Reference Group was created. Members of the group represented different sections of the community. They received information from the people they represented and also provided feedback.

The members acted as key informants. Wolcott (1988, p. 195) states that a key informant is "an individual in whom one invests a disproportionate amount of time because that individual appears to be particularly well informed, articulate, approachable, or available". A large amount of time was spent in interviews with members of the Reference Group and in interpreting and reflecting upon information that was received from various participants. Members worked closely together until the end of 1994 according to a pattern of consultation that is described in section 3.4. We attempted to work in a democratic way according to a genuine partnership. Dialogue was a two way process and no issue was considered beyond examination.

Above every aspect of our relationship, however, was the desire to facilitate action for change that was within the expectations of the Yarnangu community as properly expressed by the 'old men'. Because the Reference Group promoted the goal of transformation within the community and embraced the values, attitudes and beliefs of participants in its considerations (Kincheloe
and McLaren, 1994, p. 151), there was considerable emotional commitment to the investigation by the members. As will be seen in Chapters Four and Five, the pressure placed upon the Reference Group was, at times, extreme to the point where it significantly affected the physical health of one of the members. Section 3.4 reviews the membership of the Reference Group and the manner in which we conducted the investigation.

**Figure 3.1**
Cycle of action inquiry
Table 3.4
Stages in the research process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase One</th>
<th>Phase Two</th>
<th>Phase Three</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School awareness</td>
<td>Community awareness</td>
<td>Establishment of the Reference Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Four</td>
<td>Phase Five</td>
<td>Phase Six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection process</td>
<td>Data analysis and interpretation</td>
<td>Communicating findings &amp; tentative conclusions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3.3.4 Phase four - Data collection process

There were two main groups of respondents in Warakurna from which data was collected; the Yarnangu and certain Walypala community employees. The main objectives in working with respondents was to gain as much information as possible from as many people as possible and to do it in an ethically appropriate way according to the principles of democracy, trustworthiness and genuineness (Janesick, 1994, p. 209; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 21). Information was also obtained from some external agents such as the Kalgoorlie district superintendent of education and the Alice Springs based coordinator of the Ngaanyatjarra Council. Information from each participant had to be collected according to carefully designed methods which respected the individual and made each person feel that his or her knowledge was valuable.

One method of data collection was that members of the Reference Group and I visited the homes of the Yarnangu within the community. The format of these visits was that we would first request approval to meet certain individuals at their homes by approaching them or an appropriate family member in a common place such as the shop or community office. If the individual agreed to our visit, we would describe the sort of information we were seeking and how we would like to collect it. Once the respondents understood the request in Ngaanyatjarra, they
would be given time to respond.

A period of negotiation between the Yarnangu researchers and the respondent generally followed. The main issues that were subject to negotiation were: the use of recording devices, the best time for the interview to occur, the questions that we were likely to ask, what we were intending to do with the information that was provided, where the interview would take place, whether there would be any payment, and whether there was any 'hidden agenda' in our motives.

Once the respondent had consented to participate in the interview, we would visit the home at an agreed time and a Yarnangu member of the Reference Group would ask questions and note the responses using methods permitted by the respondent. Responses were recorded in the following ways:

1. Written notes and observations
2. Audio taped recordings on a small hand-held cassette player
3. Photographs (very limited approval for this method)
4. Drawings by respondents, especially the older people
5. No recording during the interview, but notes written immediately following the meeting and later verified by the Yarnangu researcher.

An interesting feature of this form of data collection was that once the initial visit had been made, respondents regularly initiated further contact to offer more information or to advise on other people the Reference Group should see. They saw this function as part of their responsibility as participants in the study and so informal discussions become a valuable source of data and helped to create a tone of inquiry and reflection throughout the whole community.
Additional data collection was undertaken by my wife, Alice, taking women 'out bush' for a drive. The women preferred to speak to another woman and so I would brief my wife on the issues I wanted to see discussed. Alice would then organise the excursion with a Yarnangu woman (often Bernard's wife, Jorna) and then undertake the data collection task. Upon her return, Alice would describe the trip and the setting in which information was collected. There were a number of occasions when very little was achieved to advance the investigation and the trip was simply a public relations triumph. On other occasions, however, data collection was successful and recordings very useful. Shortly after the excursion, I would meet with other members of the Reference Group to review the data that had been collected. Occasionally, information was deemed to be of a personal nature and so could not be used. Most of the data, however, was approved for use in the investigation.

Another technique of data collection was through parent meetings. These were held in the school and ideas were documented through drawings and in written English. The meetings were well attended and were subsequently formalised to occur three times per term. The meetings evolved to form the Parents' Council. The work of the council is fully described in Chapter Four, but it is appropriate at this point to state that this group had a major influence over the direction and impact of the investigation.

Attending community meetings did not provide a useful avenue for data collection because these meetings were held infrequently (about three per year) and other topics tended to crowd the agendas under the direction of a Walypala community employee.

Parent awareness workshops were held during November and December 1993. During the two-day workshops, people met in the community hall to talk about issues to do with the youth and the future that should be planned for them. Photographic records as well as minutes were kept by me while Bernard Newberry and Bruce Smith acted as the main facilitators. The operation of the workshops is described in section 4.4.

A further method of collecting data was for the researchers to travel to other communities, bring
back observations and documents, and then examine the findings in terms of how they suited the needs of Warakurna. Visits were made to Milingimbi and Elcho Island in the Northern Territory (October 1993) and Punmu in Western Australia (August 1993). Further discussion on the value of these trips to the study may be found in section 4.2.2 and 5.4.2.

A final method of collecting data with the Yarnangu was through the use of art. Many interview respondents drew as they talked. A few even referred to the drawings to support their comments from time to time. To give a specific example of the importance of art, during the parent awareness workshops I adopted a strategy devised by Alan Randell (in Bourke, Guthrie, Huggins and Turker, 1990) which was to get the older Yarnangu to draw the future of the school. The drawings were then critiqued by other older community members and refined until a consensus picture of the future emerged. Although the older people did not have a strong knowledge of English, they did know how to draw (on canvas, paper, or in the sand). As a result, complex ideas and beliefs could be explained to linguists or a Yarnangu researcher by the ‘old men’. The explanation could then be transcribed into print.

The main process for collecting data from the Walynda was through formal audio-taped interviews. Formal clearance letters were signed by the Walynda respondents. Following the completion of drafts of Chapters Four and Five, however, I allowed them to reconsider the approval that they had given. In a few cases, Walynda respondents decided to withdraw permission for me to use some sections of their comments because they saw them as being defamatory or no longer representative of particular situations. Only those Walynda in positions of decision-making authority were interviewed as were the external agents who held influence over the provision of community services to Warakurna.

Not all data were collected from Walynda and Yarnangu respondents through face-to-face means such as interviews, meetings or workshops. As described in section 3.2.1, daily journals were kept to record events relevant to the investigation, my impressions of some of the data that had been collected, and to critique of my own behaviour (Tripp, 1987, p. 10). The journal captured a number of incidents which initially seemed insignificant and wove them together to pro-
vide an important description of the events and cultures that operated in the community.

3.3.5 Phase five - Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis commenced shortly after the collection process began (in June 1992). Members of the Reference Group agreed to meet regularly to analyse data critically and to highlight the multiple realities that existed within the community (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 274). Triangulation or critical multi­plism was applied to the work of the investigators, the interpretation and analysis of information, and the methodology of the investigation (Janesick, 1994, p. 214; Schwartd, 1994, p. 124). Triangulation was used to corroborate information and so test the ability of data to support tentative conclusions and trends. The role of academic literature in confirming or questioning data was useful during this stage because it applied external rigour to the validity of the data that was collected by the Reference Group (providing multiple perspectives on the information). Triangulation was also used to confirm the professional behaviour of the investigators because members of the Reference Group acted to moderate each other's practice. Triangulation of methodology was applied in that a number of methods were used to address the investigation and therefore to ensure that no particular method or technique affected the nature of the information that was collected.

An example of information triangulation about the playgroup is as follows:

The Playgroup began at the initiative of the community advisor in early 1992. It ran, more or less, for three months ... but then it died. The community didn't ask for it and had it imposed upon them. The second reason why the playgroup was unsuccessful is because it was not based on the results of consultation. There was no 'ownership' of the project or effort to design a playgroup according to cultural ethics. The playgroup was also unsuccessful because there were no decision-making opportunities for the Yaran­gu. Many people feel disempowered and quietly refuse to become involved (journal entry, 29 March 1993).

Bernard told me this morning that the community really had no choice in the playgroup. "We said 'no' about five times but the playgroup still went ahead. It was just the advisor who wanted it because he had some money he could spend" (interview with Bernard New­berry, 30 March 1993).

A fax arrived this morning (3 April 1993) from Kidmobile, Alice Springs. An officer had visited Warakurna last week to investigate why the playgroup had been unable to get going. The fax stated that the playgroup was unsuccessful because the people didn't
want it in the way that it had been presented. The fax stated:

I recommend that you [the community advisor] empower the community by giving them choice, control, and by improving communications. Further, there is a need to educate people regarding their options so that the model decided upon will suit their needs, allow the community to "own" the project, provide for training needs, encourage the community to initiate other project ideas, be flexible to allow cultural needs to be expressed, provide support where necessary, and listen to the community and do not decide for them.

This information was received from three primary sources (professional journal, interview, and fax) and is supported in general terms by secondary sources (see Chapter Two). The information suggests a grounded hypothesis that the Yarnangu at Warakurna have historically been disadvantaged in their ability to control their lives because of the inequitable distribution of power between them and the Walypala that is apparent during the process of interaction between the groups.

On-going data analysis during the investigation helped to reduce and organise information and this led to beliefs and hypotheses being continually challenged and refined and descriptions of cause and consequence being developed (see section 3.8 for a discussion on the development of theory). The process of drawing tentative conclusions (designing constructions) and making recommendations was on-going (Reason, 1994, p. 330; Schwardt, 1994, p. 125), being formed during the field work and then acted upon. The process was one of self-reflective inquiry where "the aims of action research inquiry are to improve and to involve" (Kemmis and Carr, 1983, p. 154).

3.3.6 Phase six - Communicating findings and conclusions

The manner of drawing conclusions and making recommendations was important in promoting tentative structures in school governance as well as bringing about other changes in Warakurna and surrounding communities. At the end of the study, however, all the conclusions from the investigation including those that had already been acted upon, were brought together and shared with the community. This enabled us to make further proposals for action which were documented as a three-year strategic plan for 1995-1997 (see Appendix Two). The context
within which the three-year plan was established involved appropriate men from the community discussing and acting upon findings according to methods consistent with community expectations.

**Figure 3.2**
Summary of research strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant action research process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informed by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Critical theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Constructivist approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Action enquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Participant observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Unstructured interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Journal/field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Community meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Structured interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3.4 Operational guidelines of the Reference Group and the background of its members**

The purpose of this section is to describe the nature of the Reference Group as the key agent in the research process. Although some discussion has already taken place regarding particular functions of the group (sections 3.3.3-3.3.5), this section focusses on its composition and manner of operation. As has been mentioned in section 3.3.2, at the commencement of my research (March 1992) Bernard Newberry, a respected Yarnangu man, was appointed by the community to assist in the collection of reliable information that an ‘outsider’ would not be able
to obtain. Genuine Yarnangu participation was also helpful in that it ensured that the investigation was conducted according to the philosophy summarised in section 3.1.5. The investigation was conducted in a democratic and open way, dialogue was maximised, community protocols were respected, and the reality of Warakurna from the Yarnangu point of view was the central focus of data collection methods.

By November 1992 there were four co-researchers with Garry Stevens, Bruce Shepherd and Ivan Shepherd helping to ensure that no section of the community was excluded from the investigation due to the effect of avoidance relationships. The increased number of researchers formed a Reference Group and promoted the collaborative interpretation of data and the development of recommendations and constructions that reflected a consensus between all of the families in the community. Members of the Reference Group included:

1. Bernard Newberry - the Education Department Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) for the Ngaanyatjarra Lands responsible for fostering close links between schools and communities. Bernard was enthusiastic about the investigation because it matched his job description as well as his desire to see a return to the spirit of school-community partnership that he felt existed in the formative days of schooling during the 1970s when he worked with me at Warakurna as a teaching assistant. Bernard had a high reputation within the Lands and was committed to the principle that the quality of schooling held a key to the achievement of the aspirations of the Yarnangu in the medium term.

2. Garry Stevens - the chairman of the community and, as such, a person in a potentially very powerful position. He shared Bernard’s perception about the role of schooling in helping to achieve Aboriginal self-determination, but was also very interested in exploring ways in which the overall power of the Warlpala over community development could be reduced.

3. Ivan Shepherd - the community liaison officer and extremely influential in a section of the community in which other members of the Reference Group held no status. He was
frequently absent from the community but was nevertheless a significant person in helping to determine the relevance of information and suitability of recommendations.

4. Bruce Smith - represented the Department of Community Development (DCD) in the Lands. He had spent many years living away from the district but Warakurna was close to his traditional land. He was appointed to the Reference Group by the community because of his knowledge of the sort of organisations that could help support successful change.

5. Jim Heslop - principal of the Warakurna school (1992-1994) and principal consultant for the Ngaanyatjarra lands (1994). I had lived in the region at various times since 1976 and had a close friendship with the other members of the reference group. Bernard Newberry stood in a skin relationship as my 'brother'. As such, our families were very close such as with my son and one of Bernard’s sons sharing a common ‘country’ near Circus Water.

All members of the Reference Group had a reasonable knowledge of English, but Bernard and Bruce were highly proficient in English conversation and comprehension and were therefore extremely useful in translation work. They were also valuable in the consultative process that helped to interpret data critically through analysis, reach conclusions about reality, find the ‘truth’, and formulate recommendations. Bernard and Bruce also had employment experiences that made them feel comfortable in working with large groups such as in the community workshops that took place as part of this study.

The Reference Group played a key role in developing the paradigm of research and in implementing strategies and associated research techniques that were consistent with that paradigm. Members had to conduct themselves according to philosophical and operational criteria that were established by the Yarrangali community at the commencement of the investigation. Appropriate conduct included the following elements:

1. Bernard, Garry, Ivan and Bruce were only permitted to act as members of the Reference Group as long as they had the confidence of the community. Therefore, they had to
report to certain highly regarded individuals (the 'old men') from time to time about the progress of the investigation.

2. At least one member of the Reference Group had to be involved in every data-collection task that involved the Yarnangu as the main respondents, unless otherwise agreed. During those occasions the members acted as translators, facilitators and advisors, and also ensured that matters of protocol were observed.

3. Members attempted to have a review session every Monday morning to examine data and discuss future directions. As the study proceeded, however, our meetings were held regularly but more according to need. During some difficult times, for example, meetings were held daily, but at other times, such as when ceremonies were being conducted and research had to take second place, our meetings were less frequent.

4. We spent one full day of each school term carrying out a detailed examination of issues to do with the study and based our work particularly around data analysis and the formation of tentative constructions. It was during these meetings that draft chapters of this dissertation were examined and directions for the future discussed.

5. Informal dialogue over research matters was an important feature of our interaction, particularly because we were extremely close friends who shared often disturbing experiences that arose during the investigation. Our friendship meant that the investigation was conducted as a genuine, democratic and collaborative partnership.

6. My role increasingly became one of working 'behind the scenes' to provide support to my Yarnangu colleagues and to write about the investigation. I conducted some of the data collection, especially with Walypala respondents, but frequently found myself on the periphery of this process having to defer to the ability of my fellow researchers to conduct the workshops, meetings and conversations with members of the Yarnangu community.
7. Inquiry findings were prepared only for this dissertation and the use of information for other reasons will always require approval from Bernard, following his consultation with the community.

The Reference Group acted as a valuable forum for criticism and debate on many issues. As multiple checkers we helped to minimise the risks associated with us also being part of the population under investigation and so assisted us to show validity in data analysis. With a membership of one Walypala and four Yarnangu, the Reference Group also ensured that the study guarded against reality being viewed through the perceptions of the dominant culture (Palmer, 1971, p. 67; Hyams and Bessant, 1972, p. 187; Collins, 1992, p. 74; Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994, p. 146; Oleson, 1994, p. 164).

In the next section, I will review the ethical considerations that had to be observed during the investigation in order to keep it consistent with the paradigm of research and therefore within the parameters laid down by the Aboriginal community.

3.5 Ethical considerations

As stated in section 3.3.2, recent negative experiences with research inquiries gave the population at Warakurna considerable reason to be concerned with the ethical foundations upon which my inquiry was going to proceed. There was particular concern over how confidentiality of data was going to be maintained and that there would be no unauthorised use of information within the community outside of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

The cautious attitude of the Yarnangu highlighted the need for me to emphasise the importance of the Reference Group in gathering and analysing data in genuine partnership with the community and the need to preserve confidentiality. A further point that I had to observe comes from Hyde (1988, p. 8) in his review of the ethical nature of research on cultural minority groups. He states that "researchers have no alternative but to give an account of themselves that is credible and acceptable to the people among whom they wish to work". In view of my
desired role to be a trusted participant in the investigation, I had to include a process whereby I would be able to regularly remind members of the community about what I had come to do and what I proposed to do with the information that was being collected.

Hyde (1988, p. 9) also cautions that where language barriers exist:

> A communication gap, wherever it occurs, may make fully informed consent impossible to obtain, especially as the people under study may be unable to estimate the extent of risks to their own well-being and reputations, to say nothing of potential damage to their dignity and sensitivity.

The research paradigm and associated strategies that I adopted therefore had to distinguish informed formal consent from licence or acquiescence in order to ensure that proper consent was given by the community and to thereby avoid any compromise with the authenticity of the data that was collected during the investigation. Moreover, I had to be careful not to gain information through the use of subtle pressure, coercion or inducement as a result of not having gained community support through informed consent.

A further ethical consideration when implementing the research strategy was the position of the researchers as the key participants in the investigation. The main elements for consideration in this area were that:

1. We were involved in the situations under investigation and so were also involved in the process of theorising and creating action to improve them.

2. Close and on-going observation could be applied to various aspects of the study.

3. The political and ideological impact of research findings was going to be more profound in this investigation because my status as the school principal was more influenced by the findings than perhaps any other position. The situation of me as a researcher as well as a full-time employee is seen by Morse (1994, p. 222) as not being wise because “the dual roles may place the researcher in an untenable position”. Morse (1994, p. 223) goes on to explain that
researchers who are also employed in the setting under investigation may face difficulties in terms of role conflict, the time allocated to conduct the research, and ethical issues such as in maintaining confidentiality as well as role confusion for other employees who may have difficulties in separating the researcher from being a work colleague. As being only one member of a five person research group, however, meant that the potential researcher-employee conflicts were not apparent. Being a full time teacher-principal as well as having involvement in a some times vigorous investigation, however, meant that I was occasionally under pressure to get all of my work done on time.

4. There was a need for close cooperation and interaction between members of the Reference Group (see section 3.3.3).

A significant ethical factor that affected the paradigm and strategy of research was the need for appropriate Yarnangu (the ‘old men’) to control the research program and for others to be involved in the inquiry process (the Reference Group). A feature of ensuring that the Yarnangu had control of the inquiry was the need to encourage a form of open-ended dialogue that proceeded from the cultural base of the ‘other’ (Habermas, 1971, 1976 & 1990; Collins, 1992, p. 74; Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 106; Stanfield, 1994, p. 201). The need for this type of dialogue was because the themes that were often discussed related to the value-laden issues of class, culture, social conflict, and the impact of change on the specific experiences of community members. Discussion that was controlled in theme and format by the Yarnangu indicated that the research paradigm and associated strategies could not be designed by a non-Aboriginal researcher prior to the study. Nor could it treat the Yarnangu population as a group that could be manipulated towards testing a predetermined proposition and work towards drawing conclusions in an environment of neutrality and objectivity (see section 3.1.2).

A further aspect of the Yarnangu being in control of the research paradigm and strategy of investigation was that informants tended to avoid formal data collection situations. As already mentioned (section 3.2.1), they preferred occasions when they were in control of the location, the type of information provided, and the length of the interaction. This was suited to a natura-
listic data collection scenario where the knowledge of local individuals could be described and synthesised in order to create meaning and reality (Janesick, 1994, p. 215). Collecting information within a critical action inquiry paradigm according to ethnographic and participant action strategies emphasised the value of the *Yarnangu* in being able to offer descriptive information to *Yarnangu* researchers under the authority of the community and in a setting that they preferred. It also made it important that information that was offered by *Walypala* respondents should be critiqued by the *Yarnangu* members of the Reference Group before it was able to influence the constructions that were created by the investigation.

A final issue relevant to the ethical considerations in this research was that there was a dearth of written Aboriginal opinion available to examine, relative to the abundance of material written by and portraying the non-Aboriginal view of Aborigines (Woods, 1991, p. 16). This imbalance in written material acted as a caution when we were attempting to analyse data within the context of what the academic literature had to offer (Collins, 1992, p. 75).

In summary, the ethical considerations that affected the research paradigm designed for use in the investigation addressed the need for participants to interact in a democratic way ensuring that the point of view of the *Yarnangu* was given equality with other opinions and that the authority of the *Yarnangu* was respected in partnership with the *Walypala*.

### 3.6 Behaviour of the *Walypala* researcher

In the light of the requirements that were laid down by the community to regulate the investigation (section 3.1.1), the paradigm of research that was adopted (section 3.1.5), the strategies of inquiry and information collection techniques that were implemented in the study (section 3.2 and 3.3), and the need to reflect strict ethical standards (section 3.5), I decided to observe the following principles in regard to my conduct within the community and the way I participated in the investigation:

1. I attempted to be an active participant in the life of the community.
2. My interaction with the community was geared to establish my credibility and integrity with the local population.

3. I aimed to contribute to the development of the community as that term was defined by the Yarnangu.

4. I attempted to regularly communicate with the Yarnangu and Walypala about the progress of the investigation.

5. The Yarnangu were involved in all stages of the research process and the entire investigation was conducted under the patronage of the Yarnangu community.

6. I arranged for women to ask questions of other women and men to conduct meetings with the men.

7. Recording devices (including writing) were only used in the presence of respondents and with the approval of those people.

8. When I was involved in discussions with Yarnangu respondents, I adopted a questioning technique that was consistent with normal Yarnangu interaction such as in avoiding direct inquiry that could have been seen as an invasion of privacy (Malcolm, 1982, p. 165).

9. Respect was shown to those individuals who chose not to respond to questioning (von Sturmer, 1981, p. 20; Harris, 1984, p. 15).

10. Meetings were generally held in outside locations and in such a way as to maintain the authority of the Yarnangu in directing the inquiry process.

11. I collaborated with other members of the Reference Group to hold meetings and workshops for all members of the community in order to communicate fully about what was
happening in the investigation and to allow the community to make decisions and so act as a group.

12. I appreciated that information would often come from spontaneous situations under the direction of the Yarnangu (see sections 3.2.1 and 3.5). Following these occasions, I recorded information in a professional journal for later verification by members of the reference group (see section 3.2.1).

13. Where the respondents preferred not to be identified, pseudonyms were employed. When a pseudonym was used, an asterisk (*) identified that this was occurring.

14. Comments by individuals that were used in this dissertation were approved, sometimes on more than one occasion, by the respondents before being printed.

As I became better known in the community and as the members of the Reference Group assumed more responsibilities in the study, I found that my role changed significantly. I went from being the sole researcher in March 1992, who expected to conduct the entire program alone, to a situation where, by December 1994, I provided mainly advice, oversight, organisation, and focus to four Yarnangu colleagues who saw the investigation as their own (see section 3.4).

3.7 Timetable of research

The project commenced in March 1992 and concluded in December 1994. A timetable showing the research process is shown in Table 3.5. It summarises many of the points made in earlier sections of this chapter concerning the progress of this study.

A point in regard to the timetable of research is that the investigation did not follow a consistent routine. There were periods when the work was an intense and dominant feature of community life. There were other times, however, when research was secondary to other events such as
ceremonies, sporting events, and vacations.

3.8 Developing theory during the investigation

The purpose of this section is to review the way in which theory was developed during the investigation in such a way as to be consistent with the philosophy or paradigm of research.

**Table 3.5**
Timetable of research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992 Feb/April</td>
<td>Awareness process with the community and school employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May/July</td>
<td>Development and consultation with co-researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refine research processes, tools and time lines. Introduce the project to school and community members. Secure cooperation and form a research partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organise data collection processes, tools, and protocol. Review project processes. Commence some data collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collection and progressive analysis of data. Review project processes and interim findings. Act on tentative findings. Review time lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review project findings. Make recommendations in association with the Reference Group to the community (strategic plan).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the initial objective of the inquiry was to examine a change initiative where the community could achieve greater participation in school decision-making, the focus quickly expanded to be one of working with the *Yarranggu* in achieving general control over their community and region. Although the development of theory was not a high priority in itself in the opinion of the Reference Group, a process of theorising occurred as data was analysed and interpreted and
helped to direct the Reference Group towards further steps of action.

The characteristics of grounded theory as described by Strauss and Corbin (1994, pp. 273-285), Glaser (1992) and Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 50-89) are consistent with a number of features of the research paradigm that governed the investigation at Warakurna. These features include:

1. Information being systematically gathered from the local setting and analysed through inductive means.

2. A continuous interplay between information and analysis.

3. An emphasis on theory development at the substantive level, that is, being directly applicable to the local setting.

4. Research strategies, especially information collection techniques, being unique to the location.

5. An emphasis being placed on looking for patterns of action and interaction within the social unit as well as processes and phases.

6. Theory being fluid in that it could be revised over time.

7. Theory being sensitive to the multiple voices of the participants.

In summary, the purpose of theorising was to enhance understanding through an explanation of observations by allowing theory to emerge from the stories. Such an inductive process favoured the implementation of strategies associated with grounded theory.

A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discarded, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore,
data collection, analysis, and theory building stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 23).

Grounded theory has the purpose of "generating concepts and their relationships that explain, account for and interpret the variation in behaviour in a substantive area under study" (Glaser, 1992, p. 19). It attempts to "generate theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviours which is relevant and problematic for those involved" (Glaser, 1992, p. 75). Theory is generated by means of "analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory" (Glaser, 1992, p. 16). The process of analysis includes "multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information" and so is grounded in data (Creswell, 1994, p. 12).

Grounded theory emerges according to the following steps:

1. The researcher commences with no preconceived concepts. Rather, there is a focus on what the subjects are saying (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 23).

2. Open coding occurs where all incidents are placed into tentative categories through constant and careful comparison where similarities and differences are looked for. To achieve the constant comparison of incidents, the researcher frequently asks the question, "What category or property of a category does this incident indicate?"

3. As the process of data analysis occurs, tentative categories are replaced by core categories. Core categories and their properties emerge from the ongoing comparison of incidents with particular tentative categories. They are generalisations with significant explanatory power. The ongoing process of comparison confirms the validity of the core categories and further comparison of incidents only replicates or 'saturates' them. The emergence of core categories promotes the development of grounded theory by highlighting the abstract concepts that are
found in the properties of the categories. The properties analyse concepts in paradigms such as dimensions, conditions, contexts, types or consequences (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 116).

It is possible that comparison of incidents with tentative categories may reveal that a particular category does not reflect an emerging pattern or trend and so it is marginalised from consideration unless further analysis of incidents reemphasises the value of the category.

(4) Integrating categories to allow abstract concepts to emerge. That is, a more comprehensive generalisation is constructed but one that relates to the major topic of inquiry. The process of integration looks for connections between various core categories and properties. While still remaining close to the data, integration is a theoretical process because the categories and properties that are being compared and validated to highlight abstract concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 117). The outcome of integration is the increasing sophistication of grounded theory.

(5) Formal theory emerges if hypotheses are incorporated with grounded theories that have resulted from studies of other events or situations. Formal or grand theory attempts to generalise across situations and apply to a wider scope of research.

Because my investigation focussed on examining instances in one setting and had the objective of having immediate practical application to the community, the Reference Group attempted to develop substantive or grounded theory and not formal theory. That is, theory emerged that hovered close to the data.

By employing the increasingly complex comparative analysis described above, I developed four broad levels to generate substantive theory. At the first level, low-level generalisations about specific incidents emerged as a result of researchers analysing descriptions in order to find out
‘what was going on’ within the context of the foci of the inquiry. These generalisations were grouped into tentative categories.

At level two, core categories emerged as further observations confirmed the categories and began to ‘saturate’ or replicate them. Table 3.6 lists the core categories that were formed during the investigation. The categories were used to compare and contrast data and so encouraged the emergence of, at first, tentative grounded hypotheses. Hypotheses were refined, abandoned or endorsed through the process of ongoing comparative analysis with many other descriptions.

**Table 3.6**
Core categories of descriptions of observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category A:</th>
<th>Issues concerning the Warakurna playgroup.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category B:</td>
<td>Initial response of the Yarnangu to being invited to become involved in decision-making (parent meetings, Parent Council).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category C:</td>
<td>The example set by other Aboriginal people in controlling aspects of their communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category D:</td>
<td>The effect of decision-making and other practices of external Walypala agents on the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category E:</td>
<td>Walypala reaction to increasing Yarnangu authority (conflict, changing beliefs, power relations).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category F:</td>
<td>Exclusion of the Yarnangu from involvement in key decision-making processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category G:</td>
<td>Activity and increasing sophistication of the Yarnangu community and particularly the Parents’ Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category H:</td>
<td>Informal interaction and communication between the Yarnangu and the Walypala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category I:</td>
<td>Function of the research Reference Group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category J:</td>
<td>Emergence of the Principal Consultant’s position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category K:</td>
<td>Effect of change within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands in regard to schooling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Properties, or conceptual categories contained within the hypotheses, also began to emerge and
so increased the degree of theoretical abstraction.

Level three saw the emergence of a number of theoretical concepts as a result of integrating various grounded hypotheses and their properties. Concepts were formed about topics like the emergence of community involvement in the school, increasing Yarnangu interest in community decision-making and development, the response of the Yarnangu to changes in the balance of power, the changing values and practices of the Walypala as the balance of power began to change, and the emergence of a regional approach to the development of schooling under Yarnangu authority. Level four was the stage where the properties of integrated concepts were further integrated (compared and contrasted) to generate substantive theory.

In conclusion, theory emerged through the process of comparing and contrasting increasingly sophisticated data until substantive theory emerged. While the development of theory was not a prime objective to the members of the Reference Group, substantive theory helped to interpret observations and so assist the Reference Group in planning strategies to assist the community in moving through the action inquiry cycle (see Figure 3.1). Figure 3.3 summarises the process of theory development.

**Figure 3.3**
The process of theory development at Warakurna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fieldwork</td>
<td>tentative categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- observe</td>
<td>observations recorded as</td>
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<tr>
<td>- describe</td>
<td>core categories</td>
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<tr>
<td>- preliminary analysis</td>
<td>grounded hypotheses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>integrate hypotheses &amp;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>properties</td>
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<tr>
<td>on going comparative</td>
<td>multiple observations to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analysis of incidents</td>
<td>revise &amp; confirm hypotheses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An example of the development of substantive theory is shown in Table 3.7 which examines how control over the shop changed from Walypala hands to the authority of the Yarnangu (see section 3.2.1).

**Table 3.7**

An example of the development of substantive theory during the investigation at Warakurna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tentative categories</th>
<th>Description A</th>
<th>Description B</th>
<th>Description C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td>A: <em>justifying the attitude of the Yarnangu to working in the shop</em> (9/10/92)</td>
<td>Yarnangu perception that they are not trusted in the shop (13/10/92)</td>
<td>Shopkeeper’s belief that the Yarnangu are not ready to take charge of the shop (4/5/92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description D</td>
<td>My wife told to leave the shop; a number of Yarnangu shared similar experiences (7/9/92)</td>
<td>Violence in the shop (15/9/92)</td>
<td>Failure of work experience with the use of the student in menial tasks (6/11/92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description G</td>
<td>Teachers asked to leave the shop with no food (30/11/92)</td>
<td>Lettern from Ngaan. Council &amp; resignation of shop keeper (1/12/92)</td>
<td>Yarnangu take over control of the shop; despair of shop keeper (14/12/92)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core categories</th>
<th>Description F</th>
<th>Description H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td>F, E (see Table 6.1 for description of core categories)</td>
<td>Letter from Ngaan. Council &amp; resignation of shop keeper (1/12/92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category F:</td>
<td>Long-standing treatment of Yarnangu in the shop is the reason why so few wish to be employed in the shop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category E:</td>
<td>The non-Aboriginal shop keeper does not trust Aboriginal people to control their affairs and only offers token responsibilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category E:</td>
<td>The non-Aboriginal shopkeeper often behaves in ways that she perceives as being in the best interests of the Yarnangu even if the Yarnangu do not appreciate the behaviour.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category F:</td>
<td>Power has historically been located in the hands of the non-Aboriginal shop keeper and the nature of interaction has been premised on who holds the power.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category E:</td>
<td>The process of change in the distribution of power can be personally difficult because it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
may challenge long held and cherished beliefs.

Level 2 Properties of hypotheses in core categories:
(A) The Yarnangu have been totally excluded from positions of decision-making authority in the shop.
(B) The Yarnangu have minimal roles in the shop.
(C) Non-Aboriginal people behave according to their own point of view without consideration of the aspirations of the Yarnangu.
(D) The non-Aboriginal shop keeper holds power over the Yarnangu and allows it to dominate interaction.
(E) The non-Aboriginal shop keeper did not want to hand over control of the shop to the Yarnangu because she felt that only the Walypala could run the place.

Level 3 Integrated concepts
Category F: Yarnangu do not have any authority in the shop and have had no experience in such positions of authority.
Category E: The non-Aboriginal shop keeper holds power in the community, does not consider the opinions and reaction of the Yarnangu, and has no intention of allowing the Yarnangu to have control over the shop.

Level 4 Substantive theory
Non-Aboriginal people have interacted with the Yarnangu according to long held and cherished perceptions as to what are appropriate expectations of the Yarnangu. Non-Aboriginal people are reluctant to revise these perceptions and tend to react defensively when their perceptions are challenged.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the paradigm of research that was seen to be able to address the issue of change in decision-making authority in the school at Warakurna. It concluded that an eclectic design located within critical, action inquiry and constructivist theories would best address the research question as well as fit within the constraints of the community as perceived by me and as listed by the Yarnangu as part of the conditions upon which which the inquiry could proceed.
An attempt was made to ensure that the design was democratic in that the beliefs and values of all participants could be expressed in an appropriate way. No ideology, structure or institution was insulated from analysis and research findings had a strong link to community action.

In order to satisfy the philosophy that was described by the paradigm, participant action research (PAR), case study, and ethnographic inquiry were the strategies that were employed to conduct the investigation. From ethnography and case study came the holistic portrait of the culture, a cultural description and interpretation (emphasising context). From participant action research came committed involvement from the participants with the objective of promoting and evaluating a cycle of action. Ethnographic, case study and participant action strategies promoted the value of fieldwork and emphasised information collection through the techniques of the professional journal, discourse and art.

In line with an eclectic paradigm, research strategies, and information collection and theorising techniques, particular emphasis was placed on the need to conduct the investigation according to certain ethical principles. Firstly, a Reference Group of four Yarnangu men and myself was established to manage the research process. Second, efforts were made to collect information in a manner that respected the rights of respondents to speak to someone who was representative of their gender, language and race and in a way that was collaborative and free from coercion. Third, my role as the non-Aboriginal researcher had to be self reflective and democratic. That is, I had to live in the community as an equal participant in the inquiry process and general community life and had to remind myself of my role in relation to the Aboriginal people I worked with (Smyth, 1987, p. 25). Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, all aspects of the investigation had to be conducted under the authority of the ‘old men’, the traditional Aboriginal decision-makers.

The purpose of the next chapter is to describe and analyse the effect of the change process on the structures and operations of the Warakurna school and community according to the perception of the multiple voices of the community.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE EFFECT OF THE CHANGE PROCESS ON THE STRUCTURES AND OPERATIONS OF WARAKURNA SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE EFFECT OF THE CHANGE PROCESS ON THE STRUCTURES AND OPERATIONS OF WARAKURNA SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

4.0 Introduction

Analysis of the data collected for this research project clearly showed the development of a partnership between the school and the Yarnangu at Warakurna between 1992-1994. It also signals the type of relationship that the Yarnangu would like to have with the Walypala in the future.

The strong message that emerged during the investigation was that the Yarnangu desired to be actively involved in the process of schooling at a number of levels. It was also apparent that many Yarnangu wanted to redefine some other features of their interaction with Walypala controlled structures and enterprises that affected their well-being and the general development of the Lands.

The type of involvement desired by the Yarnangu in the school centred mainly on the creation of policy and getting the school to recognise the value of the students’ background. Involvement at a political level was particularly emphasised. There was only limited evidence, however, of the community wishing to become involved in curriculum design in a formal schooling environment and few individuals expressed any desire to assist with the student learning that occurs within the classrooms.

In the early stages of the inquiry, I was concerned that the Yarnangu might express only vague notions regarding the nature of the partnership they would like to see emerge between the school and themselves and that the dialogue might be too general to act upon with any confidence. Respondents, however, were very specific in their comments and stated the issues in their own terms. They challenged many of the precepts upon which formal schooling was historically practised by Walypala teachers at Warakurna as well as throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.
The inclusion of the Lands as a whole in their considerations was because:

We [the communities in the Lands] are like a family. We depend on each other and when something goes wrong in one school, it affects the whole schooling [system] in the Lands. That means, any change in this place [Warakurna] must have an affect on the other communities, and so we need to share the good things that are happening here with the rest of the family (Bruce Smith, audio-tape interview, 29 March 1994).

This chapter attempts to share the wisdom that was gained during the investigation of changes that moved the community towards the sort of school-community partnership that, as McGaw, Banks, Piper and Evans (1993, p. 92) say, with reference to mainly non-Aboriginal communities, “is now well established in government schools in Australia [and has lead to] ... a stronger lay voice in the policy and the governance of public schools”. The information-collection process focussed on change initiatives that affected the structures in the school, the participants in the school process, the wider community with influence in Warakurna, and communities within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands in general.

In this chapter, I will focus upon the findings that have primary application to the school and community in Warakurna. In Chapter Five, I will describe the change process as it started to spread from Warakurna to other Lands’ communities mainly during 1994. It must be appreciated, however, that this separation is artificial to the extent that incidents and issues that occurred in Warakurna influenced what happened away from the community. Similarly, what happened in places throughout the Lands affected individuals and structures in Warakurna. Hypotheses will be drawn during the data review and will be collated in Chapter Six where theory will be developed and discussed.

The themes which emerged from the study in Warakurna include:

1. Formal parent and community interaction with the school.

2. The nature of informal interaction between participants in the school.
3. The function of awareness-raising workshops in creating an appropriate form of Yarnangu involvement in the school.

4. Initial efforts by parents and teachers to engage in curriculum design and student learning activities.

5. Conflict between sections of the community as the change in relations between the school and the Yarnangu was translated to other areas of Walypala-Yarnangu interaction.

6. Aspirations of the Parents' Council in its future role in school governance.

4.1 Getting started: The experience of the Play Group

Warakuma has a history of decision-making being carried out by a select few [Walypala], and there is no [Yarnangu] expectation of involvement or control over their living environment, or getting needs met. Lack of verbal communication and informed decision making leads to a spectator approach to living: attend; participate; participate in when the activity is presented if you're interested; tune out, do something else, don't bother when the activity is of no use to your needs (Kate Merry, personal correspondence, 7 March 1992).

This comment was written as part of a report to the Warakuma community and the Northern Territory Department of Community Development. The report concluded an investigation that had been undertaken by an officer from Kidmobile (Remote Area Childrens' Service, Alice Springs) to find out why a play group was not operating in Warakuma despite three attempts that had been made between 1991 and 1992. The play group was designed to offer day care to very young children under the authority of a Walypala employee.

Merry (1992) documented an ongoing lack of consultation and negotiation with the Yarnangu community at Warakuma. Macintosh (1992, p. 4) confirmed that it had not been the practice for the Yarnangu and the Walypala to consult regularly and suggested that the play group was unsuccessful because, “there was no prior coordination, consultation and negotiation by the relevant agencies and the Aboriginal community”. The parents actually wanted a program of
after-school care for teenagers and made it clear on more than one occasion that they were not interested in supporting a play group.

I took up my position at Warakurna at about the same time as the publication of Merry’s report (March 1992). I decided to use the play group experience as a point of initial discussion with the Yarnangu regarding their notions of involvement in the decision making of the school. My belief at the time was that lessons from the attempts to start a play group might inform the type of involvement that the Yarnangu could have in the school. I was particularly keen to learn from the pattern of negative interaction that had existed between the Yarnangu and Walypala during the efforts to establish the play group and I was keen to ensure that intergroup negotiations were better handled than they had been on occasions in the past.

I spent the first six weeks of the 1992 school year introducing myself to members of the community and reestablishing the relationships that I had enjoyed when I lived in the area during the 1970s. Then I called a meeting of parents on the lawns in front of the community office (transcribed from an audio-tape recording as journal entry, 27 March 1992, p. 3) to discuss possible future roles of parents in the school and gain a better understanding of the recent history of the Yarnangu in working towards their aspirations.

As I called for the attention of the group, I estimated that there were about 58 people sitting on the grass. My surprise at seeing so many people at the meeting (in a community of only 150 people) was obvious to the ALO (Bernard Newberry) who was standing next to me.

He said, “Well, you said that you wanted to hear what the people have to say, and they have decided that they will give you a chance to listen to them and to act on what they say. They respect you and will wait to see how truthful you are and whether you mean what you say”.

I started the meeting by introducing myself and the other teachers and emphasised that the school was not mine and that the Yarnangu would be here long after I had left. Therefore, it was my intention to listen to the people and to help set up a structure that would give them the chance to be involved in the running of the school to any extent they wished. I also requested permission to tape the interview and made the guarantee that Bernard would have to approve the transcript before I made use of it.

A number of quiet ‘Yuwas’ [yes] were uttered in giving approval for the taping, but there was no obvious enthusiasm for the suggestion that the Yarnangu should govern their own school. From where I stood, some people appeared to be uninterested, a few
were clearly thinking, and a group of men had turned their backs on the meeting and were talking quietly in Ngaanyatjarra. I asked Bernard why people were not more positive in their response and whether I was expecting too much. He quietly commented:

“These people have been let down by white people many times. You have to learn to look at things from the Aboriginal point of view. Some of the people find it hard to trust the Walypala anymore. Not just that, but the Yarnangu don’t get involved in things by themselves. Everyone goes together. We move as one group.”

I mentioned to Bernard that I had read the reports on the play group and asked if that experience had caused the people to become unhappy. Bernard turned to the meeting and asked the people, in Ngaanyatjarra, whether the recent experience of the play group had disappointed them.

A lady stood up and said in clear English:

“When the play group was being talked about, we said that we didn’t want the little children to go because the mothers, the grandmothers and the aunties are supposed to look after the little children. What happened but, was that the Walypala tried to start a play group three times anyway and, when we didn’t send our children like they wanted, we heard the white people saying that we are not interested and we are too lazy to do what is the right thing for our children. We get upset when white people are rude to us and say that we are bad parents, but we get more upset when white fellers treat us like fools and think they always know what is best for us.

When the other white people were talking about starting the play group, I said ... must be three times, that I wanted a program for after-school to look after the teenagers and give them something to do other than sniffing [substance abuse], but no one listened to me. The play group business is like what has happened to the Yarnangu for years and years and we need to know why this thing you want to start with the school will be any different.”

At that point other people began to talk, so I sat down while Bernard ran the meeting totally in Ngaanyatjarra and with occasional pointing towards me. After about ten minutes with Bernard speaking to different sections of the meeting [the people were seated in family groups] he called to me and said:

“The Yarnangu think that you’ve done things the right way so far, especially with you and me working together. So the people will give you a chance, but they want us to go together at the right speed. If the people think that you are telling us what we should do or what is right for the Yarnangu, then we’ll turn our backs on the whole thing and nothing will happen.”

The meeting broke up with morning tea.

The meeting was useful in that it allowed the Yarnangu to highlight the long-standing pattern of intergroup behaviour: the Walypala had been denying the Yarnangu the right to be involved in meaningful decision making. It also suggested the hypothesis that many Walypala make decisions for the community according to their own perceptions of what is in the best interests for
the Yarnangu. The initial cynicism by the Yarnangu about taking a governing role in the school was founded on these experiences and was clearly expressed during the meeting in such a way as to reflect the passion stemming from a personal history of being denied the opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations and the ongoing denigration of their beliefs and practices by the Walypala. A further lesson that I learned from the parents’ meeting was that the Yarnangu did not work as individuals but as part a group. This meant that any change initiative had to involve all of the people performing certain functions as part of a community.

In order to respond to the requirement of the community that my research be conducted with the assistance of a Yarnangu co-researcher (see section 3.1) and to properly reflect the views of the Yarnangu as expressed at the first parents’ meeting, I met with Bernard Newberry during April 1992 in order to discuss the way in which the process of change could be initiated (journal entries, 8-9 April 1992, pp. 8-10). We talked about how we could create a mechanism through which Yarnangu could control their movement into the governing structures of the school with minimal direction from any Walypala.

The meetings between Bernard and I were hesitant, however, and the results less than satisfactory from my point of view. For example, a record of a meeting held between Bernard and me on 12 April 1992 (audio-tape interview transcribed as journal entry, p. 15) reports that:

Bernard was unsure of what to say when I asked him whether the Yarnangu wanted to be involved in the running of the school.

“I’ve never been asked a question like that before from a white man. I’ll have to go away and think and ask some other older men. Maybe we’ll get somewhere soon. Just don’t rush. The Yarnangu have never done this before. We’ve never made Walypala decisions before, and we need first thing ... I need to find out ... is whether the Yarnangu want to make decisions in the school or whether, maybe, they want to leave it to the Walypala teachers.”

Bernard explained that ‘Walypala decisions’ were those seen, at least by him, as significantly affecting the structure and operations of organisations and were normally under the control of Walypala officers. He also explained that, when a decision had to be made, particularly one that had no precedent, he needed to ask particular individuals, referred to as the ‘old men’, for direc-
I will have to see Mr Golding, Wally Porter, Mr Shepherd and Tommy Mitchell, because they are important people in Warakurna and only they can make good decisions that will last for a long time. If I make a decision by myself, I cannot be sure that it will be the right one.

Bernard made inquiries alone (we decided that I would only get in the way) and commented that all discussions would be held in Ngaanyatjarra. He called on me on 19 April 1992 (record made during and following visit in journal entry, p. 11), and stated that:

“The people say that we should start by having the meetings of parents regularly so that you can report to them about what is happening in the school. This way, the Yarnangu will learn what is happening in the school and then later maybe, can talk back to you and tell you what to do. Later on, the people can start to take over some of the jobs, maybe”.

As we concluded the meeting and Bernard was walking out the front door of my house, he commented:

“If this business doesn’t work brother [my skin relationship], I will resign from my job with the Education Department. We only have one chance at this, so let’s do it properly and not have the mistakes that the Anangu have made in South Australia.”

The conclusion that Bernard and I came to during the course of our meetings in April 1992, was that regular parent meetings should commence and that they should take the form initially of providing knowledge to the people about what was happening in the school. Another conclusion was that Bernard Newberry, and possibly others, would make a strong commitment to the process of change in the school.

4.2 Parent meetings

I enthusiastically endorsed the concept that regular parent meetings should be held because of the hypothesis that I had formed that the Yarnangu had been largely excluded from general decision-making authority in Warakurna. The parent meetings became a cornerstone of Yarnangu activity between 1992 and 1994, both at Warakurna and throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands and so it is important to track the key stages in the development of this phenomenon.
4.2.1 Structure and actions of parent meetings 1992-1993

In response to the feedback received from Bernard Newberry, the initial purpose of the parent meetings was for the Walypala teachers to share information with the Yarnangu adults about what was happening in the school and so commence a form of parent and community training. The medium-term aim was to encourage a dialogue where all participants in the school could exchange ideas, be up to date on school events, and resolve possible misunderstandings between Walypala teachers and the Yarnangu. The long-term aim was to establish a formal governing board that would work with Walypala, and eventually Yarnangu, teachers in conducting the operational and policy development of the school.

The Reference Group for this study, which initially comprised just Bernard Newberry but, from November 1992, included Garry Stevens, Bruce Shepherd and Ivan Shepherd, also agreed that the parent meetings should provide an opportunity for those who helped run various aspects of the school to share the nature of their work. In a statement regarding the significance of the parent meetings as an agency for effective communication, Bruce Shepherd commented that:

Everyone has to go together in this [move to increase Yarnangu governance of school operations and directions]. These meetings have to be held three times each term so that everyone knows what is happening in this place [the school]. The first meeting has to be working out which way we are going in the term, the second meeting is a review thing where we update what's going on, and the last meeting is where we discuss the term and see how things have gone (audio-tape recording of Warakurna parents' meeting, 2 April 1992).

Initial efforts to hold the meetings in a common place outside of the school precinct were unsuccessful because no suitable common ground could be found. As a result, these meetings were poorly attended and conclusions lacked consensus. The venue was quickly shifted to the school grounds.

The initial meetings, however, were held on an irregular basis and attracted very few people. Journal entries (29 April 1992, p. 22; 2 June 1992, p. 45) confirm that the meetings held between March and June 1992 were characterised by brevity, a lack of discussion, and deci-
sions being made by *Walypala* teachers, particularly the principal. English was the main language employed because it was difficult to find anyone other than Bernard Newberry (who was not always able to attend the meetings) who was prepared to translate between English and Ngaanyatjarra. I suspect that, at the time, some of the people were too ‘ashamed’ (their term) either to use Ngaanyatjarra in the presence of some *Walypala*, or to speak in a public setting.

My initial optimism, created by the large attendance at the first parents’ meeting (section 4.1), quickly diminished and I began to wonder whether the *Yarnangu* were really interested in becoming more heavily involved in the school. I felt that Bernard and I had done everything the right way, so why were the meetings getting off to a disappointing start? Was I expecting too much? Even meetings of the institutionally required ASSPA Committee were irregular and, according to a journal entry (26 May 1992, p. 34), it was very difficult to generate discussion on school-related issues. The decisions of the ASSPA Committee became largely an endorsement of proposals presented by the principal.

In view of my concerns, I invited Bernard, Bruce, and Jorna (Bernard’s wife) to afternoon tea (audio-tape interview transcribed into journal entry, 4 June 1992, p. 49) so that I could share my frustrations and receive advice. I particularly wanted to meet with these people because they spoke and understood English well, which was important because I spoke poor Ngaanyatjarra. The following vignette captures aspects of the event:

**Jim:** I am worried that, despite our great start, the parent meetings aren’t getting anywhere. We call them and no one comes, or, at least hardly anyone. I thought that the people wanted to have a go at becoming more involved in the school and, maybe, eventually run the place. What’s going wrong?

**After some time of silence, Bernard said:**

**Bernard:** Brother, do you think that the years of being ignored can be forgotten just by calling a couple of meetings? Do you think that the feelings the *Maru* [black] have because of the way we have been treated by *Walypala*, can be finished just like that [and he clicked his fingers]? Now, you are my brother really one [skin group association], and also in the Lord, but you can never understand what the Aboriginal people have been through over the time.

Before I was born, my grandfather ate bread with poison in the butter.
He died because the prospectors in his country thought that he was a nuisance to them. My father died because he caught a disease that white people brought with them to Warburton, measles maybe, and you know that I was a drunk too, thanks to the blokes at the weather station [Giles Meteorological station]. Those blokes made money out of us mob by selling us drink. They used us to make their money.

I’m not saying this to you to make you feel sad. I am trying to make you understand how we feel. You might say, ‘Well that happened in the past. Things are different now’. But I say, things aren’t really that much different. Maru are still ignored by the Walypala, the Walypala still make decisions for us without asking us, white people still think that we don’t bring our kids up properly and they try to do everything for us. Look at this place [Warakurna], if there’s a job to be done who does it? A white man. If a decision has to be made, who makes it? A white feller. But, if something goes wrong, whose fault is it? The Yarnangu.

You see, Mr Heslop, nothing’s really changed. You mob just use good words to make your behaviour seem right. I’ll bet the white people back in the old days, you know, ’30s and ’40s, felt that it was the right thing to do to put our people into missions and reserves because then we could become like white people. You see, nothing’s really changed. The missionaries were good people and I always respect them. They saved us from the government, but they still believed that they knew what we needed and never allowed us to be in a talking ... with them that respected our point of view. Maybe you think that you know what we need too just like the government blokes in the old days. We’ll see.

Jorna (Bernard’s wife) jabbed Bernard in the side and told him to, “keep our things private”. Bernard went on:

Bernard: There’s more I can tell you that will help you understand why Aboriginal people don’t do the sorts of things you white people think we should, but maybe I’ll talk to you again in private. Anyway, if you want to get the meetings of the parents going, you have to keep trying and wait for the people to change, slowly maybe, quickly maybe. But if you give up, the Yarnangu will turn from you. The people believe you, but you just have to wait.

Apart from being able to share, at a distance, some of the despair felt by Bernard and other Yarnangu, and to gain a glimpse of the history of Yarnangu-Walypala relations at Warakurna, I became aware that the development of a school-community partnership was going to be a sensitive process tied up in a strong emotional context. I hypothesised that this was because the Yarnangu had traditionally encountered relationships with the Walypala based on oppression, the denial of rights, and situations of inequality and lack of respect. Therefore, any change process had to challenge the effects of long-standing emotional constructs. I further hypothesised that an
adjustment to relations between the Walypala and Yarnangu would involve a dramatic change in attitudes and the display and critique of long-held personal feelings.

Despite my initial disappointment in the lack of enthusiasm shown by the community in attending parent meetings, Bernard Newberry encouraged me to continue to hold more meetings and to show that the Yarnangu could have a strong relationship with the school. He spoke of the need to understand that there was a lot of learning for the Yarnangu and Walypala to do about what parent involvement meant, and also about the background experiences brought by each person to the meetings. Bernard hypothesised that there was a long way to go in building personal relationships between the Yarnangu and the Walypala because of past misunderstandings and injustices.

In recognising the desire of the Yarnangu that parent meetings be conducted on a regular basis, Bernard Newberry advertised that the meetings would continue to be held three times each term commencing in second semester, 1992. Bernard felt that formalising the meeting routine, as well as embarking upon a promotional campaign, would help the Yarnangu to appreciate that their attendance was vital and that the meetings were now a permanent feature of the school year. Gradually attendance at the meetings increased, especially when they were followed by morning tea, but some of the Yarnangu continued to suspect the motives of the teachers. As Tommy Mitchell said in English during an audio-taped interview at the conclusion of a meeting (23 October 1992, p. 103):

I still don't know what you want from us [Yarnangu]. What can we do for the teachers? We’ve never had any training for this schooling business. Sometimes I wonder whether we are going to be disappointed in a little while and made to feel a bit silly. I’ll keep coming here though and I’ll believe you soon, maybe. Maybe I’ll believe you when I see that I can do something for the school.

Perceptions such as those expressed by Tommy Mitchell, reflected the historically derived view held by many members of the Yarnangu community that overtures made by the Walypala controlled school system should be critically and, perhaps, even cynically assessed. It was very important, therefore, that decisions made at the parent meetings be implemented quickly and that
prompt feedback be provided to the meetings on the impact of the decisions. Action to establish a school-community sports store, fencing the basketball court, and organising a school visit by the Western Australian Police Community Liaison Branch, were examples of initiatives undertaken in the second half of 1992 in response to decisions made at parent meetings.

As attendance at meetings increased and significant decisions were made, the amount and variety of discussion expanded. From October to December 1992 some of the parents began to talk about their frustrations with what they thought was the mean and arrogant way in which some *Walypala* employees in Warakurna were treating them. They confirmed the hypothesis that some of the *Walypala* were reluctant to involve the *Yarnangu* in decision-making processes. They expressed the desire to have more control over their lives, especially in tackling the issues of substance abuse, unemployment, training and schooling (Minutes of parent meetings, 10 October 1992; 15 November 1992; 4 December 1992).

The maturing of the two-way dialogue between the *Yarnangu* and the *Walypala* is shown in the following example from the minutes of the parents’ meeting (15 November 1992, transcribed from audio-tape recording):

**Jim** (principal): Rebecca is doing work on rules that children should obey here in Warakurna. Maybe some of the people could come in and also tell the students some of the rules they should obey in the community.

**Janice** (parent): The children are getting up to a lot of mischief lately. They have broken into the office, smashed a light on the basketball court and stolen tools from the workshop. Someone should speak to them.

**Bruce** (parent): The biggest problem we’ve got at the moment is the petrol sniffing. This is leading lots of our kids the wrong way. We’ve got to start our work in the school and in the home, and the *Yarnangu* have to tell the children how to behave.

**Jim:** Are people saying that they want to help Rebecca with her program?

**Bruce:** I will speak to the older children about sniffing juice and maybe some of the ladies can go into the younger children’s class. Also, the students need to see the police in a friendly way. The children only see the police when they come to arrest someone. So maybe we should get the police to visit the school when they come through on their next trip.
The meeting selected certain individuals to visit the classes and speak on the sort of rules the children should obey. Bruce agreed to approach the police and invite them to visit the school at some time. The outcome of the meeting was that Bruce visited the senior students and shared his ideas on what constituted appropriate behaviour, the Community Policing Branch visited the school, and the Yarnangu nursing-aide spoke to the junior students about the dangers of petrol sniffing.

The aspirations of the community were discussed at school staff meetings (20 November 1992; 14 December 1992) and at Reference Group meetings (4 November 1992; 30 November 1992). A decision emerged from these meetings to attempt to move the school-community partnership towards a more formal council arrangement.

4.2.2 The development of the Warakurna Parents' Council

At a meeting held on 3 March 1993, parents accepted an invitation from the school to move towards establishing a governing council under Yarnangu control. No decision was made as to when the council would be formed but the point was very strongly made by the Yarnangu that the control had to be 'real'. They stated that any evidence of external, mainly Walypala, agents "going over our heads" (Minutes of parents' meeting, 3 March 1993) and so dismissing the views of the council, would diminish the value of the council and possibly lead to it being disregarded by the Yarnangu. Unfortunately, the actions of some Walypala during 1993 and 1994 compromised the efforts of the school to demonstrate that the authority of the council was real. The effect of these actions on the development of the council will be discussed in sections 4.6.3, 4.6.4 and 5.3.2.

The council quickly realised that it had no idea how to achieve its aims. Members were not even exactly sure what their aims were (journal entry, 27 April 1993, p. 117). Following discussions on the matter with the Reference Group (who were also members of the Parents' Council), I was asked to make arrangements for a group of four community members to visit communities in Arnhem Land (Milingimbi and Elcho Island) and Punmu (Western Australia). It was hypoth-
esised that these were places where Aboriginal control over school functioning appeared to be more advanced than at Warakurna and might therefore be a help in the development of our council. We followed the awareness-raising and issues-clarifying process outlined by Alan Randell (in Bourke, Guthrie, Huggins and Turker, 1990, p. 10). In the training package, *Towards Better Management* (1990), Randell states that an early task when designing initiatives for community development is to “develop an awareness of the role and responsibilities of the community in the process of community development”. This may involve community members visiting other places to learn the potential of new roles.

Certainly, by visiting other places, community members were able to learn features of their new roles and gain an understanding of the responsibilities associated with taking on significant authority in governing the school. The *Yarnangu* were also able to appreciate that they could successfully run their own affairs even in fields that were traditionally seen as the responsibility of *Walypala*. During our stay in Milingimbi (audio-tape interview transcribed into journal entry, 12 October 1993, p. 161-163), for example, the *Yolngu* men took the *Yarnangu* for a trip around the community. When they returned, we discussed the day’s events and Garry and Bruce made their comments in a strong manner:

**Bruce:** Apart from how lovely this place is, the first thing that I noticed when we arrived here is that there are so many empty houses. I kept thinking, “Where are all the people for the houses?” So I asked the men who took us on the ute and they said that the houses were the places where the white people used to live.

So Garry says, “Who runs the place and keeps the water going and runs the power and that sort of thing?”, and the men told us that they do it by themselves with the help of one or two *Walypala*.

I was thinking about this and kept looking at the empty houses. So, later in the afternoon, I had a talk to the *Yolngu* lady principal here and she said that there were seven Aboriginal ladies who were training to become teachers.

**Garry:** *Yuwa* [yes], I spoke to a white teacher and she said that she was a bit worried that there would be no place for her to go to when she finishes here. All the teachers will be Aboriginal, men as well as ladies.

**Bruce:** We’ve got a long way to go in the Lands, but it’s good to see other Aboriginal people who are running their own affairs. One of first things we’ve got to do is to tell the white people at Warakurna to train the people to run their...
own affairs rather than push us around all the time.

Garry: I'm the chairman of the community, right? What I see is lots of Walypala doing all the jobs and making all of the decisions. Sometimes, I think that I am just used to sign the cheques and do what I'm told.

Jim: How come, Garry? Aren't you mob the bosses of Warakurna?

Garry and Bruce looked at each other and Garry sighed with frustration as he leaned forwards from where he was sitting.

Garry: Look Mr Heslop [I interrupted with, "Jim, please"], our people don't like arguing and fighting with white people. We have always been taught to respect and obey the Walypala because, if we say to them, "Do it this way"; or, "The Yarnangu want such and such to happen"; the white person either gets angry, or asks questions that we don't understand. They start using words in English that mix us up and so we just give in. It is easier for the Yarnangu to let the white fellers do what they want to do and for us to live in between their decisions and so work around the back way to do good things for our people, you know?

Bruce: That's why we can't sack the [significant Walypala employee]. He will shout at us, and cry, and then threaten us with legal stuff. And we don't have the training to talk to other white people who come and tell us what to do. The language becomes too difficult and the people become pushy.

Garry: Jim, Aboriginal people have learned to wait. We wait and the white feller leaves. We wait and the pushy Walypala forgets us and so leaves us alone. It'll be fine if we just wait. Our country won't change. In the end, white people don't bother us. We work with the ones who listen to us, and turn our backs on the ones who have angry hearts. We look at their hearts and can see what they are like.

Jim: And in the end, you get what you want?

Bruce: Yea, sure we do ... sometimes no. We just wait and we get what we want maybe or maybe we don't never get what we want. We know what we want. It's just that white people think we are stupid and can't think for ourselves. We don't stand up the way white people think we should [possible reference to a lack of knowledge about meeting procedures] and when we say something, no white feller ever listens. But the trouble is, no Walypala ever asks us about anything in a proper way where they will listen to us and where we can talk right.

As the Arnhem Land trip continued, I became convinced that the Yarnangu were processing what they had seen and would use their experiences to challenge a number of situations back in Warakurna. In a journal entry (17 October 1993, p. 165), I summed up the trip:

I measure the trip as a success from any perspective. Garry, Bruce and Ivan saw Abori-
original people running their own affairs and developed a taste for that type of authority. In a sense, they have seen a future for Warakurna, and I suspect that they will share their experiences with other Yarnangu. I return home really optimistic about the Yarnangu taking over more control of their lives and doing it in their way and not according to some Walypala way.

By raising the awareness of the Yarnangu concerning the opportunities for them to govern school processes and by committing the Walypala teachers to handing control to the Yarnangu, I hypothesised that there was little chance that the new authority structure that emerged would replicate existing and largely Walypala systems and concepts.

The knowledge that was gained from visiting other communities was shared through a series of workshops that were conducted by Garry, Bruce and Bernard (who visited Punmu in August 1993) during November and December 1993. In these workshops, community members were given the opportunity to use traditional decision-making processes to highlight the directions and frameworks that they felt would be appropriate in describing the future of schooling services in Warakurna. Moreover, the workshops suggested the aims and context of the Parents' Council in order to be appropriate to the specific culture of the community. The operation of these workshops is discussed in section 4.4.

The Reference Group held a day-long meeting on 14 December 1993 and drew up a series of recommendations based on the results of the awareness-raising workshops, the trips to other communities (Punmu and Arnhem Land), and the formal position of the Education Department (1993) in regard to the role of parents in school operations. The meeting resolved to adopt a number of recommendations with the aim of facilitating a mature Parents' Council that would be effective in its activity and sympathetic to the aspirations of the Yarnangu in Warakurna. The recommendations included:

1. Conducting a further series of awareness-raising meetings during 1994 with all sections of the community (also journal entry, 3 November 1993, p. 233). Everyone would have the same knowledge regarding the actions of the Parents' Council and the Reference Group, and would be able to process ideas gained from visits by individuals to other places. As
a result of the workshops, consultation and negotiation could be carried out with all groups of *Yarnangu* in a spirit of equality and fairness.

2. Electing an executive from the school council that could meet in the time between council meetings.

3. Devising a strategic plan that would outline the specific functions that the council would begin to supervise over the period 1994-1996.

4. Taking on an advocacy role in regard to parent control of schools in other Lands' communities.

5. Holding formal council meetings three times each term during which minutes would be taken and published.

6. Commencing proceedings to address community-wide issues in order to establish greater *Yarnangu* control over certain functions within the community.

During 1993, parent meetings quickly moved from occasional gatherings with discussion dominated by the *Walypala* teaching staff to regular and open discussion-type meetings. The meetings were controlled by *Yarnangu* office bearers from February 1994 and there were other individuals whose task it was to translate meeting details into either Ngaanyatjarra or English. Minutes were typed out in English and signed by the *Yarnangu* chairperson as well as the principal of the school.

Discussion during council meetings was not always confined to issues relating to the school. General community matters also received attention and, as a result of its widening of the brief, the council began to have a profound impact on persons and structures far beyond the confines of the school. The overflow effect of the changes to school-community relations on other interactions between the *Yarnangu* and *Walypala* in Warakurna is discussed in section 4.6.3 and
4.6.5.

A final aspect of the development of formal school-community relations was that the traditional decision makers (the 'old men') rarely attended council meetings. Bernard Newberry explained in a audio-taped interview, that the 'old men' could not be trained to do any of the tasks associated with the formal governance of the school (also journal entry, 15 June 1993, p. 136):

They have been to university already. It's not one in Perth or Adelaide, but it's in the bush. The old people have been taught the things that are important to the culture, and the school things we are trying to do are not part of their needs or the things they understand. They'll let it go and just make sure that we don't break the rules of [Aboriginal] culture. If I think that something new or important is happening, then I will speak to the right people to make sure that we younger people are keeping to the rules of the community.

It may be hypothesised from this review of the development of the Parents' Council that:

1. The Yarnangu, as a group, needed to control the process of change in order to make it permanent.

2. The practices of Aboriginal people in other parts of Australia could have a positive influence on what was possible in Warakurna.

3. The Yarnangu had specific goals for themselves in a number of areas but had been prevented from achieving their goals by the deliberate or unwitting actions of the Walypaka.

In the next section of this chapter, I will explore some of the actions of the Parents' Council from the time that it commenced functioning in February 1994. I will argue that the Yarnangu quickly learnt how to play a responsible leadership role in the development of schooling in the Lands and acted from a background and knowledge-base that no Walypula person could have obtained.
4.2.3 Early activity of the Parents' Council

The October 1993 trip to Arnhem Land (Northern Territory) by Garry, Ivan and Bruce and the August 1993 visit to Punmu (Western Australia) by Bernard, provided the Yarnangu with some concrete ideas on how to implement Aboriginal governance of the Warakurna school. The findings of the excursions were examined in the light of the stance on the devolution of decision-making authority to schools by the Western Australian Education Department (1989) and in the light of awareness meetings that were conducted in November and December 1993.

As the result of a meeting of the Reference Group in December 1993, a draft policy on school governance was written and implemented from the beginning of 1994. The policy helped refine the nature of the Parents' Council and placed it on a more mature standing. The philosophical essence of the policy may be described as being consistent with the principles of self-determination and self-management. Moreover, an attempt was made to integrate Education Department guidelines in the policy. The philosophy of the Parents' Council shown in Figure 4.1 was based on the hypothesis that the Yarnangu were prepared to become involved in school decision-making as long as it existed within certain cultural parameters.

In translating philosophy into strategic action, meetings of the Parents' Council during the first half of 1994 committed the community to being involved in a number of areas of school operation. Some of the commitments were short-term, but many were a description of the type of partnership that the community wanted to have with teachers in the longer term. The activities planned by the Parents’ Council included the following features:

1. Determining annual priorities for the school development plan.

2. Conducting out-of-school physical education, especially with the upper school students.

3. Conducting an out-of-school Personal Grooming course for adolescent girls.
4. Refining the goals and the general direction or vision of the school.

5. Involving appropriate Yarnangu and Walypala adults in lessons on the prevention of substance abuse with upper school students.

6. Establishing a job description which detailed the type of teacher needed in the school, and looking at ways of including a Yarnangu representative on interview panels with prospective teachers.

7. Helping to set up a model of teaching Ngaanyatjarra literacy both in the school and within the community.

8. Encouraging further research into entrenching and enriching the school-community partnership.

9. Establishing a group of Yarnangu and Walypala who would investigate the meaning of 'both ways' schooling in Warakurna, particularly looking at the way in which knowledge from the Aboriginal domain might become evident in the formal schooling process.

10. Assisting students to graduate from school and move into employment and training courses.

11. Supporting efforts to value the local environment as a learning centre. This included writing Warakurna-centred booklets (on such themes as Dreaming stories and childhood recollections), developing environmental print around the community including street signs and public notices, involving local adults in excursions and camps, and developing learning programs using local facilities (clinic, shop, office, workshop and roadhouse).

12. Setting up an executive committee to help the Principal implement the school development plan and respond to certain issues where discussion and sharing were central to
locating an appropriate response.

13. Approving the budget for the following school year in accordance with school priorities.

14. Developing a policy on providing schooling services to outstations.

15. Determining the ASSPA program for the school.

**Figure 4.1**
The concepts behind the philosophy of the Parents' Council of Warakurna school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Principles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal political level</td>
<td>Self-determination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Australian state political and</td>
<td>Self-management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Departmental level</td>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Equity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sensitivity towards the needs and aspirations expressed by Aboriginal people</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnership between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in order to achieve an open dialogue and ensure balance of responsibilities and power</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Equity in the provision of schooling and resulting opportunity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
From the time the parent meetings commenced in a formal manner and the Parents' Council subsequently emerged, *Yarnangu* parents and community members as well as the *Walypala* teachers participated with considerable enthusiasm. I hypothesised that the community was keen to
be involved in the school as long as that involvement was practical and of obvious benefit to the students. I also hypothesised from the behaviour of the Yarnangu that the shift in the balance of power from the hands of teachers to the Parents' Council was overdue and, despite non-school Walypala feelings to the contrary, would be of general benefit to the growth of the community and the self esteem of individual Yarnangu.

As soon as the Parents' Council was formally established, the issue of prioritising and meeting needs according to limited financial and other resources was faced. The following vignette illustrates this:

The community at Karrku (a newly established outstation of Warakurna about 60kms north) requested the council that it lobby the Education Department to build a school (journal entry, 15 March 1994, p. 178).

The desire of the parents at Karrku was that the Education Department should provide a building and a teacher. This was quickly dismissed by department planners as being too expensive for the small number of students who would attend the school. A Parents' Council sub-committee visited Karrku during March 1994 to conduct negotiations and prepare a set of recommendations for the Kalgoorlie District Education Office to consider.

No one liked telling the people at Karrku that their initial expectations were not going to be met, but the sub-committee engaged a number of 'old men' in extensive discussions with participants in the planning process and a recommendation regarding the schooling of the children at Karrku was gradually worked out. The Karrku community agreed to provide a school building and a full-time AEW from its community development budget. The Education Department (acting through me as its agent) agreed to supply an itinerant teacher for three days per week working out of Warakurna. This staff member was gained by adding the student numbers at Karrku into those attending Warakurna school and so making Warakurna entitled to an extra teacher.

There was no fuss or anger during the negotiations. The Yarnangu sat down and talked out the issues in their own way. People understood the decisions, but, perhaps more importantly, understood how those decisions were reached.

The Karrku example confirmed the hypothesis that the Yarnangu who lived in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands were the best people to resolve issues that involved other Yarnangu. By being able to present themselves as people with status and authority within the community and because they knew how to resolve problems in an appropriate way, members of the Parents' Council sub-committee showed that they could resolve problems in a way that was satisfactory to all participants.
A second example of the pressure that was faced by the Parents’ Council in taking on responsibilities and power is more profound to the extent that it was seen by council members to involve a community fighting to keep what it already possessed, rather than in the Karrku example, where negotiations commenced from a position of having nothing.

In March 1993, a shooting occurred at Tjirrkarli and the Walypala teachers refused to return following the April school vacation. The Education Department initially refused to reopen the school because of concern for the safety of its employees, but later it agreed to liaise with appropriate Yarnangu before making a decision on the future of schooling in the community. Three members of the Warakurna Parents’ Council (Bernard, Bruce and myself) were asked by the Kalgoorlie district superintendent (26 April 1994) to conduct meetings at Tjirrkarli and to provide a report to the Kalgoorlie district office. A journal entry (audio-tape recording transcribed into journal entry 27 April 1994, pp. 184-186) summarises the initial involvement of the Parents’ Council in the Tjirrkarli incident:

We drove to Tjirrkarli and called in at Warburton to see the Walypala employed at the Warburton community who had travelled to Tjirrkarli shortly after the incident and had secured the school and consulted with members of the community. One Walypala spoke of his feelings of disgust at the actions of the Education Department and implied that closing of the school had racist overtones and signified the lack of commitment by the Department to schooling in the Lands.

I suggested that the shooting needed to be seen from a number of perspectives. Communities needed their schools, but teachers needed to be protected from dangerous situations. I commented, "What we need is a way of resolving issues in a proper way here in the Lands. The idea of taking sides and making this some sort of war is not going to help anybody".

When we arrived at Tjirrkarli, Bernard called a meeting outside the clinic and about 35 adults and children turned up. Bernard asked a number of Yarnangu what had happened to cause the teachers to leave. Hudson Westlake, the community chairperson, spoke about a young man arguing with an older man about something that happened during a game of cards. His comments were recorded in my journal as they were spoken and are used with permission from the speakers:

**Hudson:** Maxwell and Terry argued all day about gambling money. Terry had won it all and Maxwell wanted his money back. Terry kept telling him to go away and that he had won it the proper way. So Maxwell went and got a rifle, put a bullet in it, and started to shout at Terry, who was in the [community] office. Everyone could hear the noise and the families tried to stop the fight. But the silly teacher walked through the fight and went into the office to get her mail [a foolish act that escalated the situation
from being a community affair to one that involved outsiders].

Suddenly, all hell broke loose and Maxwell pushed away from his father and shot at Terry through the wall of the office.

Terry lay down on the floor and dragged the teacher down too. Maxwell shot two more times and then his family grabbed him and took him away to his house. The teacher was not hurt and we all thought everything had settled down. The police came and got Maxwell and the school started the next day and everything was finished.

Now all this has happened [the teachers leaving the community] and we don’t understand. No one has talked to us. No one from the Education Department has come near this place. They just write stupid letters [facsimiles] to the people here and to the Ngaanyatjarra Council, and the Walypala ... [employees], and Ngaan. Council write letters back. This makes the problem worse than it really is. Nothing like this has ever happened at Tjirkarli before. I reckon the Walypala in Kalgoorlie and Perth are picking on us for some other reason. Maybe they are just looking for an excuse to close the schools up here.

Andrew Watson (the former chairperson) interrupted at this point:

**Andrew:** If the Education Department closes this school for violence, then it has to close the schools at Jameson and Wingellina. There has been worse trouble there in the last couple of years. Bring the bosses up here and let them see this place. Let them see that this is not a bad place. Make them stop writing to the white people here with words that the Yarnangu don’t understand.

Hudson Westlake summed up the view of the community by stating that the whole community would close if the school closed and that no one was helping to reopen the school:

**Hudson:** The parents will have to go to Ranges [Warburton Ranges] or Cosmo [Cosmo Newberry] if the school shuts. It’ll be the end of this place and no Walypala seems to really care.

The meeting was conducted in a quiet but tense atmosphere. The Yarnangu, however, were clearly concerned about the prospects for the community and wondered why everyone was being punished for the actions of just one individual. They were also confused because they felt that Walypala officials living in the Lands and in Kalgoorlie and Perth had taken control of the problem and were making matters worse. As Bernard said on the way home, “The white advisors and the school bosses should argue about racism, inconsistency, and power some other time. Those [Aboriginal] people just want to get the school open again”.

The report written by the Parents’ Council representatives to the Education Department (written correspondence, 2 May 1994) included the following conclusions and recommendations:
1. The people of Tjirrkarli should be able to ‘own’ their school and not have it threatened with closure from the Education Department, especially since the shooting was not directed at the teachers. Closing the school would be seen as a further example of the historic process of non-Aboriginal people having all the power and doing as they wish. The Tjirrkarli teacher just happened to be ‘in the wrong place at the wrong time’, and so permanently closing the school would be a gross over-reaction.

2. Whole communities should not be punished for the actions of a few people. Education Department policy should be consistent so that closing a school following a violent incident as occurred in Tjirrkarli, should also require that schools in other places (like Perth) be closed following violent incidents.

3. The community should provide the Walypala teachers with a safe environment as part of its duty of care because teachers have rights that must be upheld just the same as anybody else.

4. In general, the Yarnangu see the number of buildings in the community as a sign of the viability of their community. They believe that the more buildings there are in the community, the better the place must be and the more likely it will be that people will be attracted to live there. In other words, buildings are linked with the status of a community. A threat to close a school and withdraw the classrooms would be seen as a severe blow to the status and viability of the community.

5. More Yarnangu should be employed in the school in important capacities, and Yarnangu should undergo teacher training. Having people employed in the school who understand community situations will help to ensure that future problems will be dealt with in a more considered way. It is also expected that involvement of the Yarnangu in the school would be able to facilitate effective communications between the school and community.

6. The Tjirrkarli school should be reopened as soon as possible with a community
member being employed under CDEP payment to work as a consultant and liaison officer with the *Walypala* teachers.

While the Parents’ Council deliberated over the future of the provision of schooling to Tjirrkarli, the Education Department issued statements that expressed caution about reopening the school. The statements were made at the same time as letters issued by the Ngaanyatjarra Council implied that the Education Department was acting in a racist and arrogant manner (personal correspondence, 26 May 1994) and had not fulfilled its duty of care to students at Tjirrkarli by refusing to provide appropriate supervision (2 June 1994). The council also suggested that specific individuals within the Education Department were ignorant about the situation at Tjirrkarli and had a hidden agenda that would eventually see the closure of all government-controlled schools in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (personal correspondence, 11 May 1994).

The Parents’ Council felt that the debate between the *Walypala* (in the Ngaanyatjarra Council) and officers of the Education Department was on a different conceptual level from that being pursued by the *Yarnangu* and was serving to create a bitter conflict between the Education Department and the Ngaanyatjarra Council. Tommy Mitchell summed up the views of the Parents’ Council in an audio-taped interview following the publicising of the report written by the group who visited Tjirrkarli (recorded during the meeting; Minutes of Parents’ Council, 8 May 1994). He stated:

> Those people [Ngaanyatjarra Council and Education Department] are only interested in themselves. That mob, what are they? I tell you. They are white fellers [the community employees]. They might live in the Lands and they might be friends with us. They might have lived here for a long time. But they are white and they think like *Walypala*. They can never understand like *Maru*. It looks to me like they [*Walypala*] are messing everything up. We don’t want to fight about racial ... how you say [prejudice], or whatever you say. We just want to get the school [at Tjirrkarli] opened up again.

The members of the Parents’ Council felt that the work they were doing in trying to get the Tjirrkarli school reopened was being undone by certain non-Aboriginal officers. They concluded that the officers were following their own priorities with respect to Aboriginal development in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands and were prepared to allow the Tjirrkarli school to remain closed
while they pursued those directions. In other words, the Parents’ Council began to feel that the authority that they thought they had been given by the Education Department, when asked to attempt to broker a solution at Tjirrkarli, was not real when it came to implementing its recommendations. It hypothesised that nothing had really changed when it came to Walypala living in or out of the Lands being prepared to hand over responsibility to make decisions.

Anger and frustration was increasingly reflected in the minutes of the Parents’ Council during the second school term of 1994 as a result of the Tjirrkarli saga. The Yarnangu felt that they could have had the school reopened within a couple of weeks, and the continuing problem was the fault of Walypala decision-makers. The Reference Group decided therefore, to explore ways of gaining the power that the Yarnangu needed in order to transform authority over schooling in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands from external Walypala to the communities.

In a period of just three months, the Parents’ Council (including the Reference Group) moved from a point where its sole occupation was with developing the school services at Warakuma to one where its attention was also focussed on the development of schooling throughout the Lands. It was moving towards wanting to share its vision and experiences with other communities and seeing its role to encompass the entire district. A comment made by Bernard Newberry during a data-analysis meeting (written record in journal entry, 7 July 1994, p. 236) summed up this attitude:

> Any improvements that happen here [Warakuma] must be shared with the other communities or else they might not be able to stand alone. I reckon [hypothesise] that if our ideas for Warakuma are worth anything, then they must also be important for other places. We have two jobs now, looking after the group at Warakuma and also sharing the story with other Yarnangu in the Lands. We’ve all got to move together.

The development and initial activity of the Parents’ Council can be summed up in the following generalisations:

1. The rapid growth in activity by the Parents’ Council was an indication of the willingness of the Yarnangu to take on local decision-making functions.
2. The *Yarnangu* wanted to keep Lands’ issues in the Lands and to deal with them in ways that were culturally appropriate, taking account of the aspirations of the communities.

3. Community members possessed a depth of thinking in being able to devise specific objectives, pathways and programs despite their history of being almost totally overlooked in decision-making processes.

4. Most of the initial actions taken by the Parents’ Council were political and primarily focussed on the future structure of schooling in Warakurna and the Lands generally. They provided a context where the *Yarnangu* and *Walypala* could work in partnership under an umbrella of principles and processes devised by appropriate *Yarnangu*.

5. The *Walypala* would have to be convinced that they should put aside their personal views on what constituted ‘Aboriginal development’ and allow the *Yarnangu* to determine their future.

It may be concluded that the initial development of the Parents’ Council was rapid by any definition. The council quickly began to play a significant role in the provision of schooling services in Warakurna and promoted an agenda for change in the nature of schooling in other Lands’ communities.

In section 4.6, I will focus on the impact of change, such as in the emergence of the Parents’ Council, on members of the community. I will highlight the changed attitudes of a number of individuals and organisations and indicate that the change process entrenched the move by the *Yarnangu* to gain control over schooling services in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands in the medium term. I will also indicate, however, that the change in the behaviour of the *Yarnangu* primarily through the Parents’ Council, claimed a heavy toll on the reputation and physical well-being of some individuals, particularly those who were members of the Reference Group.
4.2.4 Conclusion

To conclude this section, the formal Parents' Council that evolved from the informal parent meetings affected the nature of interaction between the Yarnangu and Walypala in Warakurna. It will be emphasised in section 4.6.4 that the Yarnangu members of the Parents' Council engaged primarily in political activity as they attempted to challenge a number of long-standing structures, processes and institutions which had been governed by Walypala groups or individuals. A concerted attempt was made to replace these Walypala structures, operations and personnel with Yarnangu conceptions.

Although the initiative of setting up a Parents' Council was, in itself, a relatively modest achievement, the way in which the Yarnangu were in total control was the reason why the council was so active from the start. The people perceived that they had the autonomy to determine their own future in regard to the provision of schooling in Warakurna and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

4.3 The significance of informal interaction between participants in the school in facilitating change

4.3.1 Introduction

The main achievement in fostering an effective formal school-community partnership at Warakurna was the establishment of the Parents' Council. As discussed in the previous section, the council profoundly influenced the manner in which the school operated. It also played an important role in creating an awareness of the value of schooling in neighbouring communities as well as in attempting to resolve school-community crises in various places from time to time. Another strong feature of council activity was its role in promoting sound relationships between the teachers and the community.

The Parents' Council formally brought together the Yarnangu and the Walypala in the schooling process, but informal interaction between them also increased particularly once the balance of
authority began to shift from Wa~vpala hands to the Yarnangu. Some of the ways in which this informal interaction increased included:

1. The frequent movement of adults through the school and especially the classrooms 'just to look around'.

2. Adults informing teachers about future events that might affect the attendance of students at school.

3. The inclusion of teachers in a variety of community activities, such as some ceremonies, hunting trips and visiting particular locations.

4. An adult male, who lived next to the school, taking on voluntary school watch responsibilities.

5. The total absence of verbal and physical abuse of teachers by community members between September 1992 and December 1994.

6. The allocation of Yarnangu names to teachers and the placement of teachers and their families into skin groups.

7. The involvement of the Yarnangu in social events at the teachers' houses, especially when the school was being visited by officials from the Education Department.

8. An increase in the number of the Yarnangu updating teachers on news (gossip) and general knowledge of the area.

9. Increased general chatting between teachers and community members because the people wanted to maintain an association with the teachers and to maintain a mutual sense of belonging.
10. Plans being made by some Yarnangu for the future of the Walypala teachers and their families, such as with my son going to boarding school in 1998 in Alice Springs with the sons of some of the other families and me being permitted to go away for extra training in the future if I wanted and then returning to Warakurna.

11. Walypala teachers attempting to learn Ngaanyatjarra and use it during interaction with the Yarnangu.

It may be hypothesised that it was the genuine friendship, respect and honesty between the teachers and the Yarnangu that enabled the council to function effectively. Without all participants showing a spirit of goodwill and a positive nature, the process of change in the balance of power between the school and community would not have been possible, regardless of the formal institutional structures that were in place.

I will now discuss a number of features of the informal interaction between participants that contributed to the development of the school-community partnership at Warakurna between February 1992 and December 1994.

4.3.2 The role of informal interaction in complementing formal decision-making methods

Herbert Howell, long-time missionary to the Yarnangu, stated in an audio-taped interview (15 December 1993) that:

Formal meeting procedures as we [Walypala] know them are not a feature of the Aboriginal culture out here but have been moulded by Aboriginal people to suit their wishes. They know that the only way to get what they want is to attend meetings and participate in Walypala-expected formalities such as voting, minute taking, submission-writing and so on. But this is not the way the Yarnangu like to do it or indeed have traditionally made decisions. They feel awkward and so lots of Aboriginal people who have a point to make or ideas to share stay quiet. This is because of two reasons. First, the people feel uncomfortable sitting in a room with other Walypala who are taking notes and creating the formal meeting environment. Secondly, when Aboriginal people are sitting in a foreign environment and being asked lots of questions in a language with which they are not conversant, they get confused and even feel a bit silly. So they stay away. That
may be one reason why some people think that white employees have too much say in
the Ngaanyatjarra Council.

The key to working with the Yarnangu is not through formal meetings or the 'what you
can do for me' type of relationship, but to be friends, take time and listen and be your-
self. Take an interest in what they are interested in, let them into the sorts of things you
are doing, and value them as you would any friend.

An example from the inquiry of the Yarnangu mixing with the teachers on the basis of quality
and meaning, rather than purpose and function, was that I was frequently asked to confirm that
I was a Christian. The questioner would generally go on to describe the sort of person I must
have been and how I would, therefore, respond to particular situations. I was also told that my
family were "desert people" and, "belong out here [in Warakurna]" (journal entry, 26 July
1993, p. 147; 2 August 1993, p. 149) (also see section 4.3.1).

A further example of the importance of quality and meaning behind relationships was that when
a teacher was transferred to Warakurna from a nearby community, he was welcomed by the
community meeting as "a good bloke at football, very laid back, and a good bloke to take out
camping" (recorded following comment in journal entry, 18 February 1993, p. 112). There was
no judgment made on the person's ability to teach as he had been able to demonstrate it in the
other community. Rather, opinion was based on his ability to play football and the way he was
known to interact with community members in the social sphere. His function as a teacher was
not seen to be as important, at least in the first instance, as the qualities he displayed in becom­
ing part of the life of the community. Bringing the new teacher into community life was of initial
importance to the people, although subsequent interest was exhibited by a number of parents in
regard to certain aspects of the teacher's classroom work.

In the brief examples I have provided so far, it is reasonable to hypothesise that shared exper­
ience, or working together on an equal standing, is the basis for continuing personal relation­
ships between the Walypala and the Yarnangu. The informal interaction based upon me being a
Christian and belonging to the desert and another teacher being interested in going camping and
playing football, was the shared experience that provided much of support for formal structures
such as the Parents' Council.
To develop this concept further, a relevant point was made by Squeezy Porter during an audiotaped interview (transcribed into journal entry, 7 May 1994, p. 217). By way of introduction, many *Yarnangu* in Warakurna referred to themselves as Christians and, by adopting the Christian relationship of being ‘my brother’, believed that this gave us a shared set of experiences and values that tied us closely together. During a drive to ‘Squeezy’s place’ (the area where he was born), we had a conversation in the car that highlighted how important it was to him that *Walypalas* who lived in the area for long periods, be classified in some way, such as in skin groups and/or according to their activities and beliefs. Categorisation assisted him to develop particular relationships, trust, and appropriate communications.

We [Squeezy and myself] were driving along the Warburton road towards Wanarn. We had been chatting about the recent fires, local rockholes and the quality of the road. Then there was a period of silence as we went through a sandy patch and Squeezy gripped the arm rest in the car, somewhat concerned at the feeling of the back of the car slipping sideways.

Then, without provocation, Squeezy said:

“You know, you are my brother because we are both Christians and we trust in the Lord. That’s good because I can talk to you about special things because [of] who you are. Also, I can take you to special places because we are brothers and I can feel good with you. You have lived here for a long time and I know what you believe in. I know that I trust you and that’s why my grand kids can come to school. I say to my children, ‘That Mr Heslop, he’s a good person. Make sure those kids [his grandchildren] go to school. And if they don’t, then I hit them like this [and he made a swiping motion with his hand and laughed].

When you first came here a long time ago, I had to sit and watch you and wait a little while before I knew who you were. Now I am happy. It’s good.”

A further avenue to developing informal interaction between the *Yarnangu* and the *Walypala* was through sport. Football, for example, was followed with passion in the Lands and, having a teacher on the staff who was keen on being part of the team, helped him to affiliate with many in the community who would not normally have anything to do with the school. Similarly, a female teacher who took on coaching responsibilities with the netball team found that she was also mixing with *Yarnangu* who rarely had anything to do with the school. She also established a firm friendship with parents and felt able to talk to them on a basis that, she believed, could not be achieved in formal teacher-parent interaction. During the course of an audio-taped interview (transcribed into journal entry, 18 August 1994, p. 288) the teacher, Rebecca, stated:
Since I started coaching the netball, I have met people I never knew lived here. I know more about who’s related to who ( sic) and I know some of the little things that are happening in the kid’s homes. I really feel that I understand more that is going on in Warakurna and so I understand more about where my kids are coming from. Even some of the mothers have come up to me and asked me about their children and what they’re doing in the classroom. I’ve never had that before. I didn’t honestly think that the parents were interested in what the kids learn in the school. Now I know that they need someplace where they feel comfortable to talk. One place is the basketball court.

As I indicated earlier, towards the end of section 4.3.1, it may be hypothesised that the set of shared experiences and reciprocal understandings that was brought about by informal contacts was significant in helping the Parents’ Council to establish itself and become active. The council grew to become part of the general shared experiences of teachers and community and extended the nature of meaning in teacher-community relationships. The value of establishing strong informal relationships between community members and the teachers was that the *Yarnangu* believed that it gave them an opportunity to express their opinions on matters related to the schooling of their young people through council meetings as well as outside, and that the teachers would respond in a genuine manner. Taking advantage of various opportunities to interact outside of formal situations, the strength of friendship was a vehicle through which the *Yarnangu* were able to inquire about developments and issues within the school and sometimes within the community generally.

It became increasingly apparent that many decisions made by the council were initiated in the home environment and often involved older people who would not come to council meetings but who still wished to be involved in the decision-making process. To develop this point further, evidence in my journals (7 June 1993, p. 128; 18 November 1993, p. 167; 2 December 1993, p. 170) appears to show that at least some decisions were made in a manner that moved from informal discussion in a number of homes to formal council endorsement. During this process, certain *Yarnangu* collected information through informal interaction with the teachers. They then relayed the information to other groups. For example, one group of men discussed these matters with others at home, thereby consolidating their interpretation of what they had learned. Issues were resolved and points of direction were fostered. As a result of the informal decision-making that had been undertaken in other places, debate on many issues was concluded in a relatively short time at formal council meetings.
I hypothesised that the visibility and availability of the teachers enabled the informal decision-making process to occur within the community according to methods that were consistent with the accepted practices of the *Yarnangu* culture in Warakurna. The accepted processes of community decision-making complemented and moulded the formal Parents' Council structure. That is, many decisions were produced through long-standing methods and the council formally affirmed those decisions as a true reflection of community opinion and stood as a point of contact and accountability for the purposes of various external *Walypala* agents.

While I normally saw the informal decision-making process occur from a distance, on two occasions I was involved at close quarters (journal entry, 5 July 1994, p. 252). I recorded my observations soon after my involvement in the process. On the first occasion:

I was called to the community hall this afternoon (5 July 1994). A group of about 16 men (not all from Warakurna) were sitting together discussing the topic of *Youth Training* and the establishment of a TAFE annex in the Lands. I was asked a number of questions directed towards describing the resources that were currently available within the Warakurna school to assist in post-secondary training. As I answered each question, the men closed in a group that excluded me, spoke entirely in Ngaanyatjarra, and made only occasional references to me (usually by someone pointing towards me) while I stood a few metres away.

The men were apparently discussing the criteria that should be considered when deciding in which community the TAFE annex should be located. I concluded that my contribution in urging the men to take an objective approach when making the decision, was largely ignored especially when one individual said, “Well, if you don’t listen to me, there’ll be no water here tomorrow. I’ll shoot the tank”.

Following lengthy and occasionally energetic debate, during which time those involved achieved some definition of equity between all families present, it was decided that the TAFE annex should be built in a particular location near Warburton. This decision was formally endorsed by the Parents’ Council at its 20 July 1994 meeting.

Equity was not defined according to objective criteria such as nearness to water, the need for security, and the closeness of services, but was more to do with whether all families felt properly respected and represented. The decision was premised on principles foreign to those that underpin most *Walypala* decision-making. While I stressed the need to be objective and rational in a *Walypala* context, the *Yarnangu* men saw the need to show respect to all family groups present at the meeting and to represent their interests and status.
Because it was apparent that the Yarnangu desired to make decisions according to priorities and presumptions that were different from those valued by Walypala, they saw it as easier to make decisions away from the Parents’ Council meeting format and to use the council as the reporting forum where decisions were endorsed.

On the second occasion (25 November 1994):

I was walking to the hall to participate in a meeting on health-related issues. Squeezy Porter hailed me. Squeezy was drinking a bottle of cool drink and John Richards was close by apparently asleep under a tree. Squeezy called me over and indicated that I should sit down with him. Mr Richards then sat up and we formed a small group.

The men started by telling me that Beryl (AEW) should not leave the school and go to Blackstone. Both men were related to Beryl and indicated that they were concerned at the way Beryl would be treated in Blackstone. They also spoke highly of her role in the school in being some sort of link between the school and the community, a link that was especially valuable for the benefit of the very young children. Then they started talking about the need for the Walypala decision-makers to talk to them before coming up with pages of recommendations. They were disappointed that Walypala officers did not listen enough and had already made up their minds about certain matters before they even arrived. They also made it clear that the white people should talk to the old men and not the young people who couldn’t make decisions that were binding on the group.

The meeting was spontaneous. It ranged over a wide variety of topics without a predetermined agenda or time allocation. The setting was well away from the designated [by the Walypala] meeting area. The nature of the meeting was a discussion between friends. Extensive use of sand drawing and the way the discussion proceeded clearly showed that plenty of prior discussion had occurred before the meeting with me because each point was made as a definite statement of what I should do, with little comment expected from me.

Apart from the incidents of Yarnangu decision-making in which I was involved, a description provided by Steve (a teacher) showed the importance of being available to the people and supporting the processes that involved appropriate decision-makers. The day after the experience he recollected the following events (transcribed into my journal following the event, 30 April 1994, p. 211):

I was sitting at home late afternoon yesterday, when Milton knocked on the door. I asked him in for a drink but he waved back at a car that was clearly waiting for him (it
had its engine running) and asked, “If Alfred, Alfie and Quinton want to come back to school what sort of things would they do in the school?”

I gave him the normal run-down about numeracy and literacy and so on and, maybe, a bit of manual arts. Then Milton left and the car drove away. Twenty minutes later, I heard the car pull up again and then Milton knocked on the door. I asked him in, but he declined. He simply asked, “If the teenage boys, not just Quinton, Alfie and Alfred, come back to school, can the school respect them?”

I asked Milton what he meant by the term, ‘respect’? He replied that he didn’t exactly know and ran back to the car. I could see Mr Lewis and Mr Shepherd in the car. He talked to them for a moment and the men apparently made a strong point to him because Mr Lewis was waving his arms a bit. Then he came back to me.

“The men, you know, want to know how the school can respect older boys going to school. Can they work like men, or do they have to play with the little kids and be treated by the teachers like the little kids?”

Steve answered, “What sort of school work do the men have in mind for the teenagers?”

Milton replied that the men wanted work skills, manual arts, work experience and training. Steve stated that he, as the senior grade teacher, would try his best to satisfy the needs of the young men and show proper respect to them if they came to school:

“We can have the recess breaks so the older students don’t have to mix with the little kids. We can give the older boys manual arts and maybe get the community project officer involved in the training part, and I can meet the [responsible non-Aboriginal employee] and see if he’ll help with work experience.”

Milton left, the car drove off, and Steve followed it with his eyes until it stopped outside Bernard’s house. There was some kind of meeting at Bernard’s house that lasted for about half an hour.

Today, seven older teenage boys turned up at school. Bernard also came up several times and walked around the back of my room. I asked him if there was a problem and he said, “No, I’m just looking at what you are doing. The men want me to keep an eye on these boys”.

What appeared to have occurred is that some older men decided that the teenage boys should return to school, at least, for a period of time. Before the boys returned, however, certain men interacted with the school using an intermediary. Milton was used to gather information and Bernard subsequently confirmed that the information provided by Steve to Milton was correct. None of the old men directly spoke to Steve, possibly because their English was very weak. There was nothing formal about the decision-making process apart from it having to achieve certain goals. The method of decision-making was unique to the Yarnangu and would possibly
not have occurred if the men had not known Steve as a friend or if they had little confidence in him.

It is of interest to contrast successful Yarnangu decision making through informal means with the formal, Walypala-dominated, decision-making processes. The Walypala health workers called a community meeting in the hall to discuss matters regarding the health of the Yarnangu. The following description was initially recorded on a scrap piece of paper in order to note actual comments made by the participants and it was then transcribed into my journal (25 November 1994, p. 314):

As Squeezy and I entered the room, I noticed that it contained eight Walypala and no Yarnangu. Squeezy and I were told that the meeting was half over and we were informed of the decisions made so far. I suggested that the meeting was out-of-order because no Yarnangu had been present. I was told, however, that “the meeting had to start at 1.00pm and that [white] people were busy and could not wait for the Aborigines to turn up”. I was particularly disappointed to see that the teachers at the meeting were happy to accept the outcome of a meeting that had not involved any Yarnangu.

Once Squeezy had entered the room a number of women and a few men, including Bernard Newberry, joined the meeting. The format of the meeting did not change to the extent that the Walypala talked, proposed ideas, and argued with each other. The nature of Yarnangu involvement was that the people would be referred to from time to time in a sort of light-hearted but patronising way. At one time, for example, the clinic sister criticised a woman for apparently neglecting her blood sugar levels and ignoring appropriate health advice on monitoring her diabetes. I didn’t even know that the woman was ill. I reasoned that I would have been outraged if my medical history had been brought up at a meeting without my permission, but was made more angry that the health practices of the woman had been mentioned in a condescending manner. The woman was being scolded in a joking sort of way and her privacy didn’t matter.

Another feature of the meeting was that only the Walypala spoke. When discussion was held on the sale of a low-alcohol beer through the shop, Jorna, Squeezy, Melissa, Judith and DG said, “no beer” on a number of occasions. The store manager concluded, however, that the sale of the beer could occur. I was amazed at this conclusion. It was as if the opinion of the Yarnangu didn’t really matter to the outcome of the meeting.

The meeting also agreed that the play group should start again (for a fourth try) but Jorna said that she wanted the money spent on the older children. She was ignored and I guess that the play group will fail again and the Yarnangu will be spoken of as being lazy and ungrateful by the Walypala.

Further, the Yarnangu parents were criticised for not looking after their children because some of the young people had stoned the swimming pool. The decision was made that the pool would be closed if any children stoned it. Once again, we had an example of the rule that if one person committed an offence, then the whole group had to be punished.
Eventually, the meeting caused so much frustration that Bernard threatened to spear the store manager if he sold any more beer. He was then criticised by a Walypala for behaving in an uncivilised manner. He was told that the meeting had been called to allow people to express their opinions. “But how the hell can I say anything. You mob [pointing at the Walypala] take up all the air. People say, ‘no beer’, but you finish by saying that we will still have beer. Then I get angry.”

What this record of the meeting shows is that the Yarnangu could speak but not be heard. Curiously, their protestations were given no weight at all by the Walypala.

4.3.3 Improved communications between all segments of the community

It is a reasonable axiom that if you show friendship towards people, they will normally feel comfortable in approaching you when problems or misunderstandings arise. It is also a reasonable axiom that if you make yourself highly visible in the community, then you will be accessible to individuals who wish to speak to you.

By establishing a pattern of positive, informal and formal interaction between teachers and community members, the teachers worked to achieve their aim of being approachable and accessible. Furthermore, the Yarnangu parents used informal contacts to resolve specific matters with teachers before frustration and conflict developed. Similarly, Yarnangu control was fostered in an informal setting where the Aboriginal people themselves controlled the nature of interaction with the Walypala and where certain features of the Yarnangu world view could be promoted.

During the period of the inquiry, the school was increasingly seen as a relaxed and welcoming environment. For example, from a position of having just one Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW) in February 1992 because no one else wanted the job, by the end of May 1994 there was a waiting list of applicants. More importantly, there were a number of men who wanted to work in the classrooms, including one who worked on a voluntary basis in the Year 2-3 area because “Jeremy [the teacher] is a good bloke and I reckon this teaching business is good and a lot easier than working on the trucks and more useful than sitting under trees” (journal entry, 24 May 1994, p. 129). Each man had a background of limited schooling and admitted that they “played around too much [when they were in school] and didn’t like the teachers and the way
we were treated down in Kalgoorlie and Norseman" (journal entry, 25 May 1994, p. 130).
Now the men wanted to work in the school.

A further example was that family members ceased coming into the school for 'payback' purposes. During the first half of 1992, there had been a number of incidents where family members visited the school and disrupted the school program in order to abuse or strike children who were alleged to have hurt members of their family. The adults made it clear that their family honour had been compromised and so demanded retribution. Occasionally, such incidents of 'payback' in the school would cause community-wide violence. From September 1993 to December 1994, however, there were no occurrences of 'payback' within the community to resolve a school-related incident. When I was discussing this phenomenon with a man who was held in high respect, but is now deceased, he suggested that people were happy to leave the sorting out of problems between the students to the teachers because, "the teachers are Christians ... and you mob do things properly" (journal entry, 14 April 1994, p. 202) (also see Squeezy's comment in 4.3.2). In other words, he felt that the teachers respected the students and their families and would sort out problems in a way that was satisfactory to the Yarrangu.

It may be hypothesised that positive informal interaction between the Walypala teachers and the Yarnangu section of the community helped break down many barriers of mistrust and misunderstanding. Frequent formal council meetings helped parents to understand what was happening in the classrooms. Teachers home visits, however, allowed parents to share concerns and issues that were relevant to them and perhaps to very few others. This informal contact also helped teachers to feel confident about approaching parents in regard to specific matters without being worried that the message would become confused due to a lack of mutual trust.

One method adopted by the school to promote this aspect of informal communication was for the students to prepare a morning tea and to take it around to the houses. While the morning tea was being distributed to adults by the teachers and students, brief periods of interaction would occur. Discussions between teachers and parents at these times covered topics such as:
1. Unexplained student absences from school

2. The academic and attitudinal standing of particular students

3. The progress that was being made in dealing with certain council topics

4. Various domestic problems that were being encountered by families

5. Difficulties in dealing with certain Walygala employees.

The morning tea provided to the community on 16 June 1994 (journal entry, pp. 244-245) provides a good description of the value of this form of communication between the home and the school:

Because we were having a cooking session with the students, Steve suggested that we use the finished product in a positive way for the school’s sake. So a morning tea was organised. Alice [my wife] boiled water in the big urn, Rebecca’s class made some sandwiches, and Steve’s class cooked more cakes. Jeremy’s group contributed the chocolate crackles that are essential in any cooking session.

Teachers were allocated to groups of students who would take morning tea just to their own family groups in the community. That way, students would not be out of the school for too long and they would only be interacting with family members.

I went up to the Reid’s, Newberry’s and Jenning’s with a group of seven children. We went from house to house and everyone came out to receive some food. The parents and I engaged in chat for a short while before moving on. Mrs Reid asked me how her son, Donny, was going on at school and I promised to send some of his work home so that she could see for herself.

Mr Newberry reminded me that his brother was in Alice Springs and so Thomas’ children might be a little concerned about it and show it through their behaviour. Richtor came out and discussed with me the growth of his infant daughter (about three months old) and I gave the baby a short carry. He told me that he would like to play the guitar during scripture and I invited him to come down on Friday after lunch so that he could help out with the lesson.

Other people said, “Thanks”, and obviously appreciated the treat of having cake and tea. I appreciated being able to speak to all the families in the area and going into every home as well.
Interaction within the home environment was used to show that the teachers respected the homes from which the students came and provided a more relaxed environment for parents to discuss school-related and other issues. Meetings of the Parents' Council and school buildings were a *Walypala* artifact and so, in order to allow communication and dialogue to be as open as possible, it was important to reduce the impact of factors that might interfere with the communication process. Hence, the value of the home visitation program was considered to be able to reduce barriers to communication between the teachers and parents.

An important benefit of the home visits was that, from time to time, community members drew sand impressions about their vision for aspects of school development. Teachers relished the exchange of ideas with the *Yarnangu* who were clearly confident and comfortable in their home environment and wanted to engage in detailed discussions about what should be happening in the school. The following vignette highlights the value of interacting with the *Yarnangu* in their home environment. It was recorded shortly after the event it relates (journal entry, 3 December 1993, p. 170):

I was walking to Mr Lewis' house this afternoon looking to buy a spear. Mr Lewis makes the best spears in the community. Mr Golding and another old man (I don't know his name although we have been introduced), called to me and gestured for me to sit with them.

Mr Golding and the other man drew lines in the sand and started to talk in Ngaanyatjarra. Tommy Mitchell wandered over with the spear I was meant to buy and pointed at the drawing that was emerging from the sand:

"He's drawn Warakurna and the buildings in it. He's drawing other places near Warakurna. He's got Karrku and Wanarn and Kukupurra. He says that Warakurna should look after the schools at those places. See the outstations with Warakurna in the middle? The school should have responsibility for teaching the children in those places."

The notion of making Warakurna an umbrella school being responsible for the smaller nearby schools was picked up by the younger men and discussed with the Education Department and the Ngaanyatjarra Council during the first half of 1994. In December 1994, the community at Wanarn (approximately 100kms from Warakurna) decided that if their school came under the umbrella of Warakurna then it would be provided with more certainty of survival than it otherwise had at the time.
A visit by Ms Jorna Newberry can be cited as another example of the informal ways in which people provided me with ideas on the development of the school. Ms Newberry came to my house one afternoon and provided me with a painting of the future of the school. I recorded her conversation with me on audio-tape and later transcribed it (journal entry, 17 March 1994, p. 179):

**Jorna:** My English isn’t very good and Bernard gets mad at me if I talk too much anyway. But here are my ideas on this board [it was a canvas]. I’ve done it this way because I know how to paint better than I know to talk English. You can pay me if you like.

I gave her $50.00. Her work depicted concepts similar to those drawn by Mr Golding and the other old man.

**Jim:** Can you tell me about the painting and what it means? I am not much good in seeing what is on the board.

**Jorna:** *Yuwa.* This is Warakurna [points to the central sections of circles and curves]. This bit here is an outstation and this other bits is other outstations, Mr Porter’s, Mr Richard’s, Thomas Newberry’s, and second Ninga ... what’s his name [trying to identify the owner of that area] ... must be Reid’s.

**Jim:** What are these tracks over the board?

**Jorna:** This is where the *Yarnangu* walk to Warakurna, in and out [between outstations and also to Warakurna]. They play football or go shopping, or maybe visit families. This is the teacher going in and out [from Warakurna] to school the kids in the outstations and the [health] sister going around and looking after patients.

**Jim:** So the idea is that the *Yarnangu* move out to their places and the school has a teacher who moves around to the places to look after the children.

**Jorna:** *Yuwa,* people want to sit down at their place not far from Warakurna and the teacher can have a little school in each place and maybe a caravan to sleep in. He can stay for a little while and then go back to Warakurna.

The value in fostering informal means of communication was seen in the way in which problematic situations were resolved in a positive way and without confrontation or conflict. For example, the school went through a disturbing time during April and May 1994 when a number of young men spent a great deal of time loitering at the school, engaging in substance abuse by petrol sniffing. They also entered the classrooms, disturbed the students, and caused some minor damage to school property. The teachers were very concerned about the presence of the
petrol sniffers in the school, particularly their erratic behaviour and their disruption of the school program. One teacher was even threatened when a sniffer wanted to fight him during a sports lesson (journal entry, 8 June 1994, p. 237).

The parents of the young men were normally very defensive and even violent when asked to do something about the petrol sniffing. I was faced with the worrying prospect of having to visit the families to discuss the problems that the school was having with the sniffers. The following commentary is a record of events made shortly after they occurred (journal entry, 18 June 1994, p. 246):

As I approached the homes of the young men, I did not expect a welcoming reception. I waited at the perimeter of the yards of their homes and was invited in by their parents after a short time. We spoke on the verandahs of the houses and the parents agreed that the young men had been behaving poorly. Most families felt that they did not know what to do about their sons' substance abuse, but committed themselves to trying to direct the young men away from the school. They said that they felt ashamed of their boys and accepted that the school had to be left alone. I confirmed that the teachers would also attempt to show good humour as they diverted the sniffers away from the school and not make any situations worse.

Conversation went for about thirty minutes in each of the three homes that I visited. While I knew that most of the community was watching me move from house to house, I attempted to conduct myself in such a way that was respectful of the people and their property. As a result, there was no follow-up shouting or accusations between families because there had been no dishonour to any family name.

There was no foreign Walypala school principal telling Yarnangu parents what to do with their sons. Rather, the well-known principal and some families were sharing a problem and trying to find a resolution as equal partners.

There was no attempt to blame or dishonour anyone. There was no criticism of the families and I tried not to make judgments about any perceived weaknesses in parenting or the nature of young people who abuse substances.

The problem of petrol sniffing on school property was overcome through the actions of parents and teachers working together as partners and friends. The sniffers continued their activity at the hall.

It is hypothesised that judgments made by the Yarnanagu as to whether the teachers were accepted by the community were made according to what experiences and beliefs the teachers shared
with the Yarnangu and not, at least initially, on the particular skills individuals possessed as teachers. It is probable that few Yarnangu in the community understood what should happen in the classrooms and had only vague notions of what teaching involved. Therefore, they did not tend to dwell on pedagogical and curriculum matters when assessing the quality of teachers, but assessed the teachers on the basis of their out-of-hours behaviour.

Out-of-school relationships between the Yarnangu and the Walypala were centred upon:

1. Recreational basketball or music in the evening
2. Repair work done on cars, appliances and buildings
3. Sharing afternoon tea from time to time
4. Some teachers working with teenagers to prepare sporting teams for forthcoming competitions.

Because the quality of the friendship and trust between individuals increased as a result of informal positive interactions, a number of myths regarding the behavioural characteristics of the Walypala and the Yarnangu were challenged (journal entry, 7 July 1993, p. 140; 17 June 1993, p. 137). The impact of these myths had historically distorted communication between the groups and so prevented the development of relationships based on sincerity and equality. An example of the impact of such a myth on the beliefs of the Yarnangu is that when Beryl Jennings approached me for transport to a nearby community (recorded following the conversation in journal entry, 28 May 1993, p. 132), I asked her why she was asking me and not a member of her family. She replied that her relatives were “hard and won’t share, just like white people”. I asked her if all ‘white’ people fitted her classification and she timidly affirmed that perception.

Another example of the behaviour of the Walypala is seen in a conversation I had with Bernard Newberry shortly after I arrived in Warakurna (recorded following the conversation in journal
entry, 2 February 1992, p. 2). It concerned the way in which familiarity was expressed through the use of names:

Bernard came to see me this morning about his itinerary for the month. I said, "Good morning, Bernard" and, he said, "Good morning, Mr Heslop".

I said, "Come on Bernard, we have known each other on and off for over ten years. How about calling me Jim?"

He replied:

"I find it hard to call white people by their first names because we were never allowed to call them by Christian names when we were in the mission. That would have been seen as not having respect for the missionary. Ever since then, I have met lots of white people who want to be called 'Mr so and so' or 'Mrs so and so'. Now I always call Walypalas ‘Mr’ and ‘Mrs’."

I asked him if anyone had ever told him why he had to call them by those titles and he reflected for a moment and said, "A lady missionary once told me that when I became a civilised person, I could call her by her first name. I don’t think she really ever expected that to happen."

This example promotes the hypothesis that myths of this kind are a product of the exercise of power by one group over another. That is, a dominant group often justifies its oppressive treatment of a minority group by creating ‘truths’ that are demeaning to that group and require the dominant group to undertake certain actions to preserve its interests. The following journal entry suggests a similar conclusion (2 July 1994, p. 250):

A significant Walypala came to the door of my house this afternoon. He informed me that it had been decided (by whom?) that "the blacks" (his term) were not permitted to go into white houses. I asked him why "blacks" were not permitted to enter white houses and he responded with the comment:

"Well, we all know that blacks are dirty and if one white person lets them into his house, then you’ll have herds of them trying to get into all of the houses. And that’s no good for our privacy. Anyway, this is where the white people live. Let the Aborigines stay on their side of the creek."

I asked him how long he had held these views about Aboriginal cleanliness and the likelihood that we could be overrun by them if we let them into our houses, and he replied that:

"Everyone knows what Aborigines are like. Just look around you. Are any of the houses clean? How often have you been woken up in the morning by an Aborigine wanting something? Give them an inch and they take a mile."
I asked him if that's why he had built the tall fence around his house, to keep the blacks out and he replied that he didn't like being disturbed at all hours by them. I responded by suggesting that what he was asking me to comply with was probably illegal and did it worry him that his house and all the furniture in it was actually owned by the Aborigines?

He turned and left muttering his oft-repeated words made in reference to me, “Well, what can you expect from a red anyway.”

As the balance of power between the Yarnangu and the Walypala began to shift an environment developed that encouraged an open democratic dialogue between individuals. An example of this is that many Yarnangu came to feel that they could visit my home (recorded following the event in journal entry, 11 September 1994, p. 289):

Jorna, Karen and Beryl [community members] came in this afternoon to look at photographs and to have a cup of tea. Jorna said:

“I never in my life thought that I would be sitting in this house and talking to white people as friends. I thought that I would only get as close as the front steps and then be hurried away by a dog or something. Now I can come in, especially if I am angry with some other white people and know that I won’t be ignored.”

A final aspect of the way in which the informal Walypala-Yarnangu relationship was able to improve communications between the groups was that the teachers made a concerted effort to learn the Ngaanyatjarra language between 1992 and 1994. Using lessons devised by linguists, the teachers followed a program of learning the vernacular and were encouraged by the Yarnangu to practise their new skills in the school and community.

The learning of Ngaanyatjarra by the teachers was significant in two ways. First, teachers were able to communicate with parents and students in an increasingly sophisticated and effective manner both on professional issues and as part of the process of improving friendships. Second, the Yarnangu made it clear that they appreciated the efforts made by the teachers to learn their language and engage in some communication with them. It was seen as a sign of respect on the part of Walypala teachers for the Ngaanyatjarra language and local culture. Some relevant comments made by the Yarnangu regarding this issue were:

We were taught in the mission days that our language was evil and used by the devil.
We are now learning that God speaks to me in Ngaanyatjarra and that the teachers think that our language is good (Lula Nelson, journal entry, 7 December 1991, p. 1).

You will be speaking Ngaanyatjarra just like Tjungki and Kaarilka soon (local linguists) (Beryl Nelson, journal entry, 3 March 1994, p. 181).

I think it's good that the teachers have gone to Warburton to learn more language. It is a sign of respect. We respect you and learn your ways and you respect us and learn our language (Bob Shepherd, journal entry, 1 July 1994, p. 235).

The comments were all supportive of teachers continuing to learn the language.

4.3.4 Conclusion

During the course of this chapter, I have documented a number of ways in which the Walypala living in the Lands and outside of the area instituted a form of unequal treatment of the Yarnangu. These ways included:

1. The use of discriminatory and patronising terms and references to support an ideology that explained inequality. For example, the Walypala employee’s description of the Yarnangu, as “not being as civilised as the mob up in Arnhem Land” (see section 4.6.3), was one that attempted to legitimise discrimination. The open discussion and rebuke of a Yarnangu woman about her health practices (see section 4.3.3) was an example of the parent-child relationship that was promoted by many Walypala when interacting with the Yarnangu.

2. Attempting to deflect blame onto the Aboriginal people themselves rather than being prepared to discuss particular issues. This was particularly apparent through criticisms that were levelled at the Parents’ Council such as in references to them as ‘communists’, ‘undermining the community’, and ‘blackmailers’ (see section 4.6.3). These comments were used to make the council members feel as though they were to blame for everything that went wrong in Warakurna and so were acting in a counter-productive way.

3. Stereotyping and labelling people in such a way as to constantly reinforce the link between the topic of discussion and their race.
4. Bureaucratising people and issues according to classifications of race or gender in order to exclude the *Yarnangu* from fully participating in discussions. The use of meeting procedures was described as a way of excluding the *Yarnangu* from participating in decision-making (see section 4.4.2). Similarly, the behaviour of the *Walypala* in creating barriers to the reopening of the school at Tjirrkarli was seen from the perspective of them attempting to prevent the school from being reopened and, in so doing, denying the *Yarnangu* their rights to make decisions that were respected by the *Walypala* (see section 4.6.3).

5. Excluding individuals from discussions by the use of specific language that denied some participants a complete understanding of the context of interaction. The confusion in the mind of many *Yarnangu* that resulted from their exposure to complicated English was used as a reason why some people refused to participate in meetings (see section 4.3.2).

On the other hand, by embracing the change in power relations between *Yarnangu* and *Walypala*, participants in school, teachers were able to engage in sincere, open dialogue and work with the *Yarnangu* according to a social structure that respected each other's ability to solve problems. The strength of the school-community partnership rested in the informal relations and open communication that existed between the teachers and the *Yarnangu*. Relationships were based on the principles of goodwill, mutual respect, equality, sincerity, openness, honest communication, and genuine friendship.

The attempt by teachers to develop firm friendships with the *Yarnangu* and be seen as active members of the community gave expanded meaning to the nature and roles that they held. The development of close personal relations between the *Walypala* and the *Yarnangu* out of hours made it a simple function of friendship to invite the *Yarnangu* into the school to participate in a variety of development activities. Informal interaction between friends made it possible to provide opportunities for open and honest communication and so foster a sense of shared understanding. It also made it possible for the teachers and the community to engage in shared experiences and establish many common purposes for the school as well as the community.
In highlighting the developments in informal relations between the school and community over the past three years, this section has made it clear that *Yarnangu* community members and *Walypala* teachers tried hard to work closely together and to extend goodwill even in circumstances where there was a sense of emotional risk-taking between individuals and cultures.

### 4.4 Awareness-raising workshops

#### 4.4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in section 4.2.1, parent meetings that were held in the first half of 1992 were infrequent and demoralising affairs with few people attending and no one having any clear perception of where parent involvement should be directed in order to have a positive effect on the school. The nature of the meetings changed, however, as the *Yarnangu* saw their decisions take immediate effect on school policies and operations (section 4.2.1) and as the *Walypala* teachers took advantage of the decision-making methods of the *Yarnangu* and implemented them through the school-community partnership (section 4.3.2). Moreover, following the excursion by a few men to Arnhem Land in October 1993, the emerging vision of the *Yarnangu* began to create possibilities for the community to play a significant role in the school.

In October and November 1993, the Reference Group recommended that a community meeting be convened to talk about the form of parent involvement, participation and control that would best suit the needs of the school. They did not want to initiate change without having the proposals endorsed by the whole community. As indicated earlier, we adopted the workshop approach outlined by Alan Randell (in Bourke, Guthrie, Huggins and Turker, 1990).

#### 4.4.2 Workshop approach

In December 1993, the Reference Group called the community together in the Warakurna hall to "talk about the future of the school and the young people and to make strong decisions about the part to be played by the *Yarnangu* people in the school" (audio-tape recording; supported by
Bernard Newberry opened the workshop in a visually effective way by waving a document around (McGinty, 1989). He held it up and said:

"See this. Who can tell me what this thing is? [lengthy pause]. Come on, can't you remember this report? I'm not surprised. This is the report that was written by a Walypala lady a few years ago. It is about the idea to start teacher training for our people. It is nearly four years old now. The Walypala from the university or somewhere came here and talked to some of us. Then a report was written and what happened to it? Nothing. All the promises were made to us in this report, but nothing happened.

Now look, everyone is here in the hall and around and only a few Walypala are here to listen. We are going to run this workshop ourselves and come up with ideas that we want and not what some white feller thinks we should want. Do things the right way and listen properly to the right people. Let's get started."

Bernard directed the Yarnangu to think about what they would like Warakurna to look like in five years time. He was particularly keen to get the people to think of the role that schooling would play in the development of the community.

The first part of this visioning exercise was to ask two related questions:

1. What do you want your young people to do when they become adults?

2. Where do you want them to live?

The consensus answer to the first question (as recorded by me on a large blackboard and confirmed by Bernard in discussion with the Yarnangu) was:

We want our children to be able to run this place. We want a Yarnangu to be the community advisor, a Yarnangu to be the clinic sister, and a Yarnangu to run the shop. We also want the Yarnangu to be trained as teachers.

The unanimous answer to the second question was:

We want the children to stay here and look after the place.

**Bernard:** If you want the Yarnangu to run this community here, how will they run it? What do you want the place to look like in the future?
People were asked to express their views in a way they were comfortable with, whether through their writing, talking or forms of art. While the drawings, writing and discussions were going on, Bernard, Garry, Ivan and Bruce moved around the hall suggesting changes, asking questions, and encouraging people to look at the ideas being developed by other families.

Gradually, inter-family movement commenced and discussion was based on what people had drawn or written. The process of discussion took most of the day as people talked to others and then returned to their own ideas to make certain changes. As in any meeting, a few people lost interest and started chatting about babies, football and other gossip. Nevertheless, the framework around which future development of the school should occur began to emerge and the people, especially the older ones, applied themselves with vigour and passion.

At the end of the day, Bernard drew the people together and collated the ideas in order to draw out common and important points. He suggested that no final conclusions would be reached immediately and that people should approach members of the Reference Group over the next few days to make further suggestions and changes to the recommendations that emerged from the workshop. Tentative conclusions reached by the meeting included the following:

1. The Yarnangu want a greater say in running the school, but not in the area of the development of formal curriculum within the classroom.

2. Political pressure should be exerted to create a training agency that would provide secondary and post-secondary training.

3. Yarnangu involvement in schooling should extend beyond the Parents’ Council at Warakurna and support the development of a Lands-wide schools’ board.

4. Support should be given to other communities that wish to bring about improved school-community relationships.
5. The *Yarnangu* support the Warakurna school and are prepared to assist in learning programs that occur outside of the school and in the *Yarnangu* classroom (the bush).

6. *Walypala* teachers should respect the culture of the *Yarnangu*, but focus on quality teaching in areas of Western knowledge, especially Mathematics and English. Student outcomes should be comparable to those of *Walypala* students.

7. Since traditional culture and the vernacular are the responsibility of the *Yarnangu* they only have a limited place in the school, but approved activities include the teaching of Ngaanyatjarra by the AEWs and the use of the local environment in curriculum areas.

8. While only the *Yarnangu* should teach Ngaanyatjarra, the *Walypala* teachers should be encouraged to learn the language of the students and *practise* their skill in a social setting.

9. The *Yarnangu* must be consulted by the teachers before any controversial topics are introduced to students. The Parents' Council and AEWs are appropriate personnel to monitor this area.

10. Officials from outside the Lands are generally welcome but must have their agendas approved by the Parents' Council before arrival.

11. School buildings are part of the land and reflect the viability of the community. They are, therefore, treated in a special way by the *Yarnangu* and moving them can deeply affect the morale of the people.

12. The teachers must respect the values and practices of the *Yarnangu*, especially by not consuming alcohol in the community and not interfering in *Yarnangu* affairs such as disputes and arguments.
13. Awareness meetings should be held twice a year so that all the *Yarnangu* can move together in development and be genuine partners with the teachers.

In order to achieve the objective that the conduct of the workshop should be controlled by the *Yarnangu*, the Reference Group decided to implement a raft of strategies and protocols as a result of these deliberations.

First, a wide range of *Yarnangu* were assembled and placed into family groups (about ten to fifteen people). Men and women sat together. The views of traditional decision-makers within each family (normally the older people) were seen to be particularly important. As Bernard Newberry commented during the planning stage (audio-tape recording; supported by minutes of Reference Group meeting, 29 October 1993):

> If we have a meeting and only the young and the educated people come, just like in normal Walypal.ai meetings, then we might not come up with the best decisions. You see, in our way, the old people are very important in making the big decisions. They give us the rules to go by. So we have to make sure that we get the old people along to the workshop to make sure that the decisions are right and will really happen ahead in time.

In effect, Bernard was suggesting (with support from other members of the Reference Group) that the most accessible *Yarnangu*, usually young, articulate in English, and well travelled, were sometimes the most inappropriate people to consult when making decisions. Rather, the main decision makers were the older people who perhaps could not speak English and were rarely prominent in public situations (see section 4.2.2 and 4.3.2). Therefore, it was hypothesised that the involvement of older people in a setting that was comfortable would be most likely to yield the sort of findings that would suggest the limits within which school innovation could proceed and be successful.

While older people had the task of setting the parameters that described the vision for the future of schooling in Warakurna, the younger people addressed the specific issues that worked to meet that vision. Within each family, debate was generally conducted under the quiet authority of the older people. People drew pictures or made sand drawings, especially those families who sat
just outside the hall, and they coordinated discussion with varying amounts of oral direction and physical presence. One vignette which shows how decisions were made by the Porter family during the workshop, will serve to illustrate the crucial roles exercised by elders in their family groups (audio-tape recording; supported by minutes of Awareness Meeting, 5 December 1993, p. 5).

The ladies sat together with the younger ones more to the outside of the group and behind the older ones like Squeezy’s wives. Squeezy and his father, Wally, sat in the middle of the group with Squeezy doing most of the talking, often in response to what his wives said. Wally appeared to say little, but there were times when the group stopped talking and looked at him. He would mutter something after apparently having a think and then the talking would start again. For a lot of the time, Wally would draw his ideas in the sand on the floor and this would be referred to by others in the group on occasions. He also left for varying lengths of time and would then return to take up his old position again.

I questioned Squeezy about the way his family worked during the workshop. He commented that his father “looked after the meeting by making sure that no one said anything wrong”. He also said that he had to tell his wives to be quiet now and again:

> We can say what we like and talk about lots of different ideas for the school here and in other places, but sometimes we have to remember who we are and what we want for Warakurna as *Maru* and not *Walypala*. We have to remember which way we are ...

[heading! (a show of the hands pointing forward).

The second strategy decided on by the Reference Group was that Ngaanyatjarra had to be the main language used during the meetings. It was considered that the use of the vernacular would enable them to express ideas and concepts in their own manner and to a depth of description that would convey the intended meaning. Locally based linguists were requested to attend the workshop and translate the ideas into English so that *Walypala* representatives could make a contribution to the meeting and also be able to accurately record the findings.

The third strategy employed was the use of appropriate questioning techniques. I observed that the most successful questioning method used in the meeting by Bernard and other members of the Reference Group was use of transactional questions. This meant that there was a two-way
discussion based on exploring a tentative suggestion or option. These are just some examples of his use of that questioning technique:

Maybe it should be that the school should have the *Yarnangu* make the important decisions so that the school runs better for the children, or maybe the people think something else.

I am thinking that maybe the people want to have more to say about what the school teaches but I am wondering about what you think about that.

I am wondering whether the idea of employing the community chairman to be the student welfare officer is a good idea, or maybe we need to look at student attendance in another way, say, from within the families.

This type of questioning was especially valuable when participants did not have the same background assumptions in common because the questions started with the presentation of knowledge and people were asked to build upon it in their own way. Similarly, the statements acted as a catalyst to thought and provided direction in order to achieve positive outcomes for school planning.

An observation of the use of the questioning technique is shown in the following vignette (audio-tape interview; supported by minutes of Awareness Meeting, 5 December 1993):

**Bernard:** So far people are saying that we have not been listened to for a long time and that one reason is that white people have been the ones who have written the reports and made the important decisions. Sometimes we have been asked, but most of the time, we have been ignored. So what you mob are saying is that we should set up a *Yarnangu* school’s board for the whole of the Lands or a similar sort of thing? Or maybe you are thinking of something different. Remember, we have got to go together in this.

**Thomas:** We need to have a board of *Yarnangu* to make decisions for the schools out here and to talk straight to ... education *Walypala* who live in Kalgoorlie and Perth. We need a board that can listen to the rules of the Education [Department] as well as the old people, and can then make the decisions for the school.

Thomas turned to an unnamed old man sitting next to him and said:

**Thomas:** An organisation thing where *Yarnangu* can look after the school business is a good thing for the people?
The old man replied to Thomas:

**Old Man:** Yuwa, with just one white man [on the Board] who lives in the Lands. That's good. But make sure that the school works like all the others outside of the Lands, not a silly way.

**Bernard:** Anyway, maybe we should have some Watypala on the board who come from the Ngaanyatjarra Council and the Shire?

**Mr Golding:** Wiya [no], only one white man, we said.

**Bernard:** I am thinking that the school’s board should have two Maru from each community or maybe you think just one person is enough.

**Garry:** Just one or there will be too many Yarnangu to make the right decisions. That one person can come back to the school council and talk to us and we can tell him what we think.

**Jorna:** Yuwa, but there should be two people from Warakurna and Warburton because those schools are big. But one person from the other schools because they are small.

The conversation continued for some time over the proposed structure of a Lands' schools' board. There were no direct 'why?', 'how?', 'when?', or 'what?' questions, just the discussion-type, almost round-about questioning through the presentation of scenarios. The debate that ensued as a result of the use of this technique, however, was very effective.

The fourth strategy adopted by the Reference Group was that the facilitators of the awareness workshop had to be Yarnangu men who were able to switch between English and Ngaanyatjarra (language and concepts) and could demand respect because of their status within the community. The Yarnangu facilitators were also able to ensure that the workshop observed cultural protocols particularly in respecting the importance of the old men in making decisions and in allowing all community members the opportunity to express their points of view in an appropriate way.

It was also important that there were as few outsiders at the meetings as possible. A comment made by Kathryn Shepherd (Minutes of Awareness Meeting, 5 December 1993, p. 3) explains the reason behind this strategy:

Lots of white people make us feel as though we have to be careful about what we say.
They think that maybe the white person only wants to hear certain things, and so they keep quiet in case they make a mistake and say something that will get them into trouble. The white feller also makes the meetings so hard to follow that we lose interest.

**Figure 4.2**

Phases of the Awareness Workshops

1. **Description of the topic of the workshop**
2. **Generating ideas within family groups (show in art of other forms)**
3. **Criticism and sharing through collaboration**
   (asking appropriate questions)
4. **Exploring new insights in family groups in art or print**
5. **Developing a consensus insight and proposals for the future**
   (Write and draw ideas for the future and highlight the common elements)
6. **The views of each family group are brought together and the common aspects are isolated and highlighted as proposals for future action.**
The fifth strategy employed for the workshop was that the meeting had to be action-oriented, with the discussion and debate identifying relevant goals as well as the strategies needed to achieve those goals. Through the use of Walypala school personnel and linguists to provide a rapid secretarial service, the ideas were documented quickly and widely distributed. They could, therefore, stimulate action and also change perspectives of thought. Moreover, the teachers were able to explain the position of the Education Department in relation to specific points. Publicly available notes were brief and, as much as possible, supported by an artistic interpretation.

A final strategy in the conduct of the awareness meeting was that participants were paid for being part of the workshop. Following negotiations between the Reference Group and the community advisor, the wages that were paid to participants, usually Community Development Employment Program funds (CDEP), were varied to reflect participation in the awareness workshop. Allocations were also made from the school grant and ASSPA funds to pay individuals who were not in receipt of wages from CDEP. Participants were paid an extra $50.00 for their involvement in the workshop.

There was no single rule that governed how the workshop was to be structured with respect to gender interaction. The way in which both sexes interacted during the various meetings that were held at Warakurna between 1992 and 1994 appeared to depend on the nature of the event. In a Youth and Training meeting (17 November 1993), for example, separate sessions were arranged so that men and women could work through the same topics in parallel. The separation of people into gender groups was to highlight the important role of women in determining the future opportunities for the girls and of the men in determining the possibilities for creating the future for the boys. At community meetings, however, younger men sat up the front with the old men in the most prominent positions, while the women sat in family groups with their children, to the rear and side of the forum. The men did all of the loud talking and appeared to make the decisions. The women seemed to have no involvement in the decision-making process and just chatted between themselves.

In summary, as a way of stimulating widespread and on-going discussion on schooling and
training matters, and in explaining to the Parents' Council and teachers how the school should be run, the awareness-raising workshop was a useful starting point. It provided the opportunity for family groups to come together and provide a level of input that defined the broad context within which change should occur. The workshop held in December 1993 affirmed the right of the Parents' Council to further develop its decision-making role during 1994.

4.5 Initial efforts by parents to participate in curriculum design and classroom activity

4.5.1 An overview of the state of the traditional education of young Aboriginal people in Warakurna (1992-1994)

Children need to learn from their mothers and fathers so that they can grow up properly (Minutes of parents meeting, 16 February 1993).

The very little children should stay home and be taught by their families and not be in the school or a playgroup (Milly, journal entry, 17 March 1993, p. 113).

Parents are interested to make sure that their children are being looked after in the school in the right way (Squeezy, journal entry, 20 May 1993, p. 122).

These comments appear to indicate that at least some parents perceived that they had a role to play in the education of their children between 1992-1994.

On the other hand, there was some evidence that the school had substantially replaced the traditional role of many parents in educating their children. Comments to support that point of view were made during an interview with Bernard Newberry and Herbert Howell, a missionary and linguist (audio-tape interview, 4 June 1992). Herbert stated that:

Many parents are not fulfilling their traditional roles in teaching their children culture because they think that the school performs the role of educating their children now.

This point was made in regard to the apparent lack of story telling about the Dreaming within the community and the increasing use by young people of Aboriginal English rather than Ngaa-nyatjarra during informal situations. A central aspect of traditional education that was apparent in
Warakurna until recent times was that, at night, an adult would share important stories with children around the camp fire. Another significant feature of traditional education that no longer frequently occurred was for parents to teach their children a number of important skills during visits to the bush. As Bernard Newberry stated (audio-tape interview; supported by minutes of staff meeting, 4 June 1992):

Parents don’t take their children out bush anymore unless it is in a car with rifles. They shoot a kangaroo or an emu, throw it in the back of the car, and then bring it back to town to eat it. They don’t stay in the bush for long anymore. The people are just getting fat and lazy and worried about other things ... you know like sitting down, playing cards and watching TV.

A third important theatre for traditional learning in Warakurna was through the practices of the Law. During the period 1992-1994, observances of the Law regularly occurred. They peaked during October and November when adolescent males were initiated into adulthood in accordance with traditional beliefs. The Law dominated most other events in daily life (including schooling) because they were seen as the occasions when, according to Bernard Newberry (journal entry, 29 November 1993, p. 169), the ‘other type of learning’ would take place.

During an interview with Bernard Newberry, Bruce Smith and Garry Stevens (journal entry, 7 August 1992, p. 72), it was made clear that ceremonies and other features of the Law were an important part of the community’s provision of cultural and religious teaching to the young people. They referred to it as part of the teaching of discipline to young people as a way of helping them to understand why things happened in the community, the way they did, and how important it was that these ways were continued in the future.

Most ceremonies were conducted over short periods of time. Two reasons for this phenomenon were the increasing ease and speed of travel between communities (Minutes of interview with Howell and Newberry, 4 June 1994) and the demands made by other events like football and schooling on the time of all but the oldest of the people.

Some functions that were traditionally fulfilled by family members appeared to have lapsed for
various reasons and were expected to be taken up by the school. Evelyn, for example, sent her daughters to school because, “the school disciplines naughty children and no one in my family can get their respect anymore” (comments recorded as journal entry, 8 April 1992, p. 13). A similar lapse in respect for appropriate people was reported by Squeezy and Peter (audio-tape interview transcribed into journal entry, 8 April 1994, p. 190) in regard to the impact that substance abuse was having on the traditional structure of relationships between adults and children. Moreover, according to Herbert Howell and Bernard Newberry (Minutes of staff meeting, 4 June 1992; also Glass 1990, pp. 46-47), the coming of television, radio and other community services diminished the importance of traditional teaching because the time during the evening when instruction normally occurred saw young people watching television, or away from home playing basketball under lights, swimming in the indoor pool, or playing in the hall. There was no evidence provided to me during the study of any attempt to control access by young people to television, other media services, and recreation facilities. That is, there was a form of education or socialisation that was being received by the Yarnangu at Warakurna but with no scrutiny of its value and the effect it was having on the beliefs of individuals.

While I have already mentioned (see section 4.1) that Yarnangu parents did not support the formal schooling of very young children, they did appear to believe that the school and not the family should provide after-school care for teenagers.

The teachers should play with the children and buy go-carts for them to ride in. The kids don’t want to go bush as much anymore because there is so much more to do in the community and the school should look after all of that (Minutes of Parents’ Council, 31 May 1994; also Glass, 1990, pp. 46-48).

A number of the Yarnangu were concerned at the changes which limited opportunities to educate young people in traditional knowledge, skills and behaviours. Some of their opinions may be seen in the following examples. The examples illustrate that the concern expressed by the Yarnangu appeared to lack a consistent approach towards stimulating action because it was confined to the behaviour of certain individuals and not to the group as a whole.

Beryl Jennings (AEW) stated, during a meeting designed to document her job descrip-
tion (7 July 1992), that, since the school occupies the children for much of the time during the day, she sees it as one of her functions to teach the children some traditional things and to emphasise how these things are important to the on-going welfare of the community.

"I sometimes keep them [the traditional things] secret from the white teacher because she might get angry if I am teaching them. So I say things in Ngaanyatjarra very quietly and teach the children the way to behave and things they should know as Aboriginal kids. I do it quietly when the white teacher can't stop me."

Beryl feels that if she does not tell the children aspects of traditional knowledge, then that knowledge may possibly never be taught in other places (journal entry written at the time of the conversation, 7 July 1992, p. 80).

Beryl Jennings provided a type of rear guard action against the largely Walypala school assuming responsibility for most of the students' learning. While Beryl recognised that she had to use what the students know in order to be able to transmit knowledge that the Walypala community think is desirable, she also believed that she had to take on the role of providing some traditional education because there were times and circumstances, even in the classroom, when such teaching was seen by her to be appropriate.

Bernard Newberry shared the concerns of Beryl Jennings regarding the need for young people to be taught traditional knowledge (audio-tape interview, 15 July 1993). As a parent, he never spoke to his children in English unless he was in the school, because he felt that the Ngaanyatjarra language was under threat from English. Moreover, he would take his family to 'his place', Circus Water, nearly every weekend for the practice of a traditional life style and to remind his future-thinking children of their past:

My children are walking along the edge. They have to learn traditional knowledge and skills because they are Maru and will always belong to that culture. But, if they are going to help us [Yarrangku] to control our lives and run the businesses in the Lands, then they must learn western knowledge, behaviour, and skills. They have to be able to mix with white people in business and through friendships, and so they need good English, good maths, good writing skills, and a knowledge about the rest of the world.

It's not easy to know where the balance between western and traditional ways lies. If the children go one way, they will know all about their traditional ways but rely on others to look after their western lives. If they go the other way, they will be skilled in whitefeller ways but might forget about their traditions. They might even leave Warakurna. I don't want that, but if Darren [his son] wants to be a pilot, then I have to give him the values of my family so that he will never forget where he belongs and what is important, no
matter where he lives. That way, he will always come back. I lived down south for ... must be fifteen years. But I came back. I was well taught by my uncle to value my culture.

While it may be suggested that the practice of traditional culture was changing and even diminishing in some ways, the value of the family, the Law, and autonomy were still significant in defining the aspirations of most adult Yarnangu at Warakurna. The challenge to them was the manner in which the traditional education of their young people was to occur in a future which offered so many attractive Western-derived creations.

4.5.2 The nature of parent participation in formal school instruction

During the course of this investigation, the Walypala teachers commented that they had enormous difficulty getting Yarnangu parents to come into the school and help with lessons regardless of how relevant to Aboriginal culture and knowledge they felt the lessons were. If payment was made, however, some parents would perform limited tasks, mainly storytelling. Pre-primary teachers, in particular, had been asking since 1992 for parents to volunteer their help, but none was ever forthcoming. The inability to attract parent help was a source of considerable frustration for the teachers.

Perhaps two reasons for the lack of parent participation in classroom activities centred on the dominance of the Walypala teacher in lesson preparation and classroom design and the differences between the Yarnangu perception of the way learning should occur and the way in which the teachers structured that process.

While the teachers could not attract community members to participate in classroom activities, there was always a supply of adults willing to join in ‘bush camp outs’ and prepared to share stories, teach the making of artifacts, instruct students in Ngaanyatjarra, and take the young people hunting. It was as though the teaching campus for the Yarnangu lay in the bush around Warakurna, while the teaching campus for the Walypala lay in the specially built school premises. Perhaps this distinction existed because, in the bush, knowledge and power were in
the hands of the Yarnangu and so the relative status of Yarnangu and Walypala cultures differed depending on the context.

It may be suggested that a way of overcoming the apparent reluctance of the Yarnangu to participate in formal curriculum development and implementation was to redefine what knowledge, skills and values were important in the schooling process. An essential part of the revision of the definition of knowledge, skills and values was to create a new context in which the Yarnangu and the Walypala perceived issues that determined the beliefs and attitudes of the participants in schooling. Some of these issues included equity, pedagogy, school governance, learning outcomes, and goals.

I was interested in exploring the balance that the Yarnangu at Warakurna wanted to see exist between the school representing their culture, knowledge and values, and the Walypala curriculum and learning expectations. I therefore asked Beryl Jennings (AEW), Garry Stevens (Community chairperson), Ivan Shepherd (Community Liaison Officer), Pearl Scott (parent), and Bernard Newberry (ALO) to meet with me in the school office after school on 14 April 1993 (audio-tape interviews transcribed in the school journal, pp. 39-43) to discuss issues associated with curriculum development. I have provided a standard English summary (at the request of the meeting) of the key points they agreed upon:

1. Formal schooling should stress western knowledge because the Yarnangu want the children to be able to work on an equal basis with the Walypala when they grow up, especially in business.

2. We want our children to learn good English and all the other subjects that Walypala children learn in Perth.

3. We want our children to live in Warakurna as adults and to look after the place. This means that they should be able to run the community (school, clinic, roadhouse, office, workshop, and store) as well as maintain traditional beliefs and culture.
4. We don't want the children to leave the Lands and have jobs away from the area. They can, however, leave for training.

5. We are uncertain as to the balance that should exist between Western and Aboriginal knowledge in the school, and it is probably not the right question to ask, at least, at this time. Rather, the Yarnangu want to be involved in the running of the school first so we can then negotiate where individual subjects get their content and beliefs. What we need first is knowledge and training in specific areas, especially teaching.

6. The Yarnangu know that when their children attend the school, it is likely that aspects of their traditional knowledge and beliefs will be challenged in some ways. It is hoped that basic or core beliefs will remain firm, but it is accepted that the Yarnangu culture cannot remain the same forever. Lots of influences are redefining cultural practices, like substance abuse, television, quick transport and modern services.

7. Any subject that is agreed by the teachers and parents to draw content from traditional knowledge and values must be taught only by the Yarnangu. This particularly applies to any instruction that employs the Ngaanyatjarra language.

8. If any traditional knowledge is taught by the Yarnangu in the school, then the Walypala teachers must respect the content and the methods used during instruction. Students are sometimes subject to criticism and denigration by teachers, though generally not deliberately.

9. The Yarnangu have strong opinions about what they expect from the school. They may not yet have the formal teacher training to be able to guide students along the way to achieving them, but they do know when students are not doing well in school. They also know that traditional knowledge can help achieve those aims and are aware when that knowledge is being used in a patronising or paternalistic way by teachers.

10. The teachers should use the local environment more in their work.
11. If teachers use the local area to achieve learning objectives, then some Yarnangu will be able to help in various ways. They might not want to come into the school rooms, but they do know the local area better than any teacher and can help the teacher achieve the aims of a lesson. Sometimes, the Yarnangu can act as escorts on excursions, demonstrate skills or share knowledge, and sometimes they can be the leader and use the teacher as an assistant. The key to involving Yarnangu adults in the schooling of the students is for the teachers to talk to the community about the learning needs of students and to negotiate how the Yarnangu can help.

12. Learning that is done in school is very important, but it should not be in competition with the traditional knowledge that is taught at home. There is a place for each type of learning. The school helps children to become competitive in the western world and traditional instruction achieves the aim of fostering family values and beliefs. The purpose of each type of education is different.

13. The Yarnangu might start coming into the classrooms if they think they can help, but most have not been very successful at school in the past and will need encouragement and a feeling of being needed before they will become interested.

14. Many Walypala invite the Yarnangu to help and then give them trivial jobs or ignore them altogether. There is not just an issue of inviting parents to help, but there is also a need to use the Yarnangu effectively when they come.

15. There should be no formal school-type programs for very young children (under the age of three years). Families should be responsible for looking after those children.

Summing up the views of the meeting, it is hypothesised that schools often acted as cultural agents of assimilation. They stood as artifacts of Walypala culture and, since most Yarnangu failed to satisfy the requirements of schooling when they were students, their initial impression was that they had little to offer in the classrooms as adults. Many Yarnangu had also been taught that worthwhile learning only occurred within the walls of the classroom. As a result, few par-
ents liked helping in the classrooms because they felt that they had nothing to offer.

Bernard, Gary, Ivan, Pearl, and Beryl hypothesised that an appropriate model of curriculum and pedagogy was one in which both Yarnangu culture, including language, as well as Walypala academic skills were taught. These two areas, however, had to be kept strictly separate with respect to how they were constructed, where they were taught, the personnel involved in the teaching process, and the ceding of control of the learning process to the Yarnangu instructor. The Walypala teachers did not have to be excluded from a learning situation where a Yarnangu adult was sharing traditional knowledge, skills and processes unless their presence affected the confidence of the Yarnangu teacher. The principles outlining the interaction of western and traditional learning spheres are consistent with models of domain separation within a two-way structure. This occurred within the framework of there being a partnership between Yarnangu and Walypala participants who were attempting to work together in order to achieve the aims of the community as determined by appropriate members of the community.

The eventual success that teachers had in encouraging Yarnangu parents to participate in some school functions away from the school premises was a reflection of the domain separation recommended by those who attended the meeting on 14 April 1993. Traditional cultural content was emphasised when the school ‘went bush’ and the balance of authority, knowledge and skill was very much related to the background of the Yarnangu. Similarly, when Ngaanyatjarra was taught in the classrooms, only Yarnangu adults provided the instruction. The expertise and authority was held by them. On the other hand, knowledge that was derived from the largely Walypala society was mainly located in the formal school setting and was placed under the authority of the Walypala.

While there was evidence that two domains of learning were emerging in Warakurna, there was a context in which the operations of the school were premised on the existence of a social environment within the school that was acceptable to the Yarnangu community. That is, parents were keen to ensure that the school satisfied certain cultural features related to religion, economic independence, group or family action, and respect for the vernacular.
An incident involving Milly is a valuable example of how the school had to operate within certain social and cultural expectations (journal entry, 28 April 1993, p. 118):

I was setting up for an evening of video showing. The scene was quite busy with children coming in while I was arranging the seating and setting up the video player.

Suddenly, Milly [a parent] walked into the classroom. She started shouting and swearing, calling the children “dogs” and “black”. Milly was angry at the teasing that her daughter, Tina, had allegedly been exposed to over some weeks. Milly threatened the children with a lump of wood and then stormed outside.

I left my wife in charge of the video and followed Milly outside. She was standing near the entrance of the school sweating profusely and obviously upset. She said that the “dogs” in the classroom [the children] were teasing Tina, and if it didn’t stop, she would stop sending her children to school. I replied that if she was upset with anything that happened in the school, she should come to the school office and tell me. I mentioned that there were good ways of dealing with problems like teasing, but that there were bad ways of handling it too.

Milly told me that the school had to look after her honour in that “her name could not be shamed in the school”. I agreed with her and said that I was upset at the behaviour of the children and that I would deal with it to make sure that no one “shamed” her name anymore. Milly repeated that she wouldn’t send her daughter to school if it meant that she was going to be teased.

She then mentioned how upset she was with her three boys (aged between 15 and 20). The boys were regular petrol sniffers and their behaviour was “shaming” her. She mentioned that all of the people were telling her to look after her boys better and that they were “rubbish people”. Apparently, the teasing suffered by Tina was related to the behaviour of her brothers.

In discussions with Milly, and this was confirmed by members of the Reference Group, it was socially acceptable for individuals to work to restore integrity to the family name following some act of ‘shame’ against it. Both the children in the school and adults in the community appeared to expect such intervention to occur. In other words, it may be hypothesised that there was a point where Yarnangu beliefs and cultural values permeated all structures and institutions of the community, including the school. That is, any two-way partnership between the Yarnangu and the Watypala operated under the umbrella of Yarnangu cultural authority.

As an example of what could happen to a school which attempted to reject the cultural authority umbrella of the community, one school in the Lands averaged an attendance rate of about 28% of
the school-aged population between February 1992 and December 1994. As part of my role as the Principal Consultant for the area (see section 5.2), I held two parent meetings (8 June 1994 and 16 June 1994) to discuss the issue. The meetings were held away from the school:

The parents were very forthcoming about the reasons why they refused to send their children to school. Once they appreciated that I wasn't there to punish or threaten them, they unanimously signalled that they would not return their children to school until the principal was shifted.

The reasons they gave were that the school and community were as far apart as they could be and the community no longer saw the school as having any relevance or value because it had broken some basic rules and had shamed the Yarnangu.

Examples of the rules that had allegedly been broken by teachers were:

1. Manhandling and striking children.
2. Shouting and swearing at parents and preventing them from entering the school.
4. Making negative comments about the childrens' parents and their ability to rear their children.

A Walypala employee stated that she could not insist that children went to school because she feared for their safety. The parents repeated their demand that the principal be withdrawn before looking at supporting the school again. They were happy to allow the Walypala school to provide a largely Walypala-derived schooling, but made it clear by their actions in withdrawing their children, that such a form of schooling could only be provided within a certain cultural context.

The points made by those who attended the 14 April 1993 meeting and the issue regarding cultural respect in the school were translated into the following group of hypotheses by the Reference Group:

1. Power relations between the Walypala and the Yarnangu should be such that all participants in the schooling process have responsibilities to fulfil within a framework created under the umbrella of appropriate Yarnangu and reflecting the cultural aspirations of the Yarnangu.

2. Knowledge, skills and values cannot be seen just from a Walypala perspective
and the way in which they are to be taught to the students should not be seen from just a single
approach.

3. Content that derives from traditional areas should be placed under the authority of
Yarnangu teachers (not necessarily trained according to Walypala expectations).

4. Teachers should see their role as being employed to serve the community and to
devolve leadership to the most appropriate people.

5. Yarnangu students do not have to be less committed to their culture and traditions
just because they are schooled in being able to work with the Walypala, as long as principles
such as equity and collaboration are observed.

In summary, it was hypothesised that any school-community partnership at Warakurna had to be
built upon the concept of recognising and making use of the strengths of the participants within
an accepted cultural context. It was further hypothesised that the school had to expand its
definition of ‘premises’ and ‘nature of decision making’ to include the local environment and
Yarnangu control over the direction of schooling. Similarly, it was hypothesised that the
definition of what constituted ‘appropriate knowledge to be learned’ had to be challenged to
remove it from being an artifact of Walypala society which largely attempted to prepare students
to live according to the presumptions of the Walypala community. Rather, knowledge had to
encompass what the students needed to know in order to live in Warakurna according to a
manner decided upon following careful consideration by appropriate members of the community
(see section 4.3.3). What has already been referred to as ‘the other type of learning’ was very
important in any understanding of the purpose of schooling and appropriate knowledge. This
recognition had to be regarded as fundamental to the philosophy underpinning the schooling
process if Yarnangu students were to achieve high levels of performance in schooling according
to community perspectives.

The teachers at Warakurna recognised the minimal involvement of the Yarnangu in curriculum
development from the time we arrived at the beginning of 1992, but we did not attack the problem until the beginning of 1993. In line with the way parent meetings evolved to become a formal Parents’ Council, joint progress by the Walypala and Yarnangu in curriculum development commenced, but progress was less marked than in the fields of school governance and community debate.

The pattern of joint curriculum development that occurred during this study is best illustrated by the following example (journal entry, 24 October 1994, pp. 300-302), because it highlights a struggle that the teachers and the community went through to see the emergence of curricula that embraced the principles noted during the 14 April 1993 meeting. The following journal entry reviews the implementation of a school project on the theme of ‘Work’ from April 1994 to September 1994. Detailed notes were also made in the school development plan (1994-1995):

We [the teachers] decided at the end of first term 1994 to prepare a program called ‘Work’. The objective was to get the post-primary students to think about life after school. We were particularly keen to get the students to leave school and go straight to work or a form of training.

Shortly after the program commenced, the teachers became very concerned about student participation and interest in the various activities. A variety of techniques were implemented but few students participated with any vigour. I spoke to Bernard, Bruce and Garry about the problem we were having because it was them who had mentioned on a number of occasions that they wanted the Yarnangu to take control of their own businesses and for the children therefore, to go on to training and employment.

I outlined to the men what the teachers were trying to do. Then Bernard made the observation that we needed to recognise that few of the Yarnangu adults actually worked [from a western perspective] and that there was no example being set for the students to follow. In other words, students did not know what ‘work’ meant because few Yarnangu were working.

Garry made the observation that a disadvantage of CDEP was that it did not encourage anyone to work. He commented that work for which CDEP was paid included collecting firewood and killing kangaroos. As a result, the students were confused as to why the Walypala teachers were distinguishing between work and life away from work. CDEP had meant that people virtually got paid for doing nothing, while those who were fully employed received little extra financial recognition or status within the community.

While I was fascinated with Bernard’s observation, I asked how we could get the students to think about work? We planned the involvement of a few Yarnangu in the lessons to talk to the students. Bruce talked about his job with the Department of Community Development and Peter spoke about his job working with the Walypala builders who came in from outside of the community. Other people to share about their
employment included the assistant shop keeper, the chairperson of the community and the health clinic assistant. Teachers were not able to plan the involvement of these people ahead of time because Bruce had to persuade them (which was not always easy) to come into the school.

A further feature of the involvement of the Yarnangu in the ‘Work’ theme was the organisation of a Youth Conference on 18 November 1994. Bernard told me that he was worried that the youth had no idea about the nature of work and so a group of men organised and ran a conference (audio-tape recording transcribed into journal entry, 20 November 1994, p. 322). Yarnangu from other Lands communities were invited and, when the students from Warakurna school turned up, there were over one hundred people in the hall.

The conference went extremely well and I was left to do other things while the Yarnangu adults gathered the young people together and conducted a day-long workshop. Bernard appeared to have few clear objectives before the conference started but managed to reach a definition of ‘work’ for the students to use (which closely resembled the nature of Wahypala employment), listing the types of work that could be undertaken in the communities, like health, teaching, accounting, shop management, mechanic, and artifact making, and he resolved to plan in particular directions to help achieve the aspirations of the youth and their parents. An important finding of this workshop was that there should be a training facility built in the Lands that could provide post-primary courses.

At the conclusion of the conference, I acknowledged that the ‘Work’ theme was a component of the curriculum that could only be successful if conducted primarily by the Yarnangu themselves. I appreciated that the nature of ‘Work’ was part of community culture and should be placed under the leadership of the Yarnangu. While the Youth Conference was occurring, however, the teachers pooled all the curriculum elements that referred to the topic of ‘Work’ and made a Work Skills booklet. The teachers felt they could use the booklet to develop the theme in association with what the Yarnangu were doing at the conference.

A final feature of Yarnangu involvement in the ‘Work’ theme was that the students were orga-
nised to spend a week in work experience. This was negotiated by Bernard and me with community officers. It was unsuccessful because the Walypala officers involved used the students as cheap labour and did not teach any skills. One student, Bernard’s son, spent his first day sweeping floors in the shop. He was supposed to do a windmill run for three days and receive instruction in associated skills. Bernard stopped the work experience project after just two days and sent the students back to school. He took no action against the Walypala officers, however, at least none that he told me about (Warakurna school journal, 15 November 1994, p. 86).

The teachers and the Reference Group came up with the following hypotheses as a result of drawing conclusions from the Youth Conference and implementing the strategies in the Work skills booklet (Minutes of staff meeting, 26 November 1994, p. 305):

1. The Yarnangu were generally reluctant participants in formal curriculum development and implementation in the school in the way that had traditionally been undertaken by Walypala teachers.

2. The Yarnangu would become involved in the curriculum when they felt that they could add value to the students and have a personal or community reason to become involved.

3. The Yarnangu did not create curriculum in the same way as Walypala teachers. They did not give certainty through forward planning, so there was a sense of spontaneity in the process.

4. Teaching students by appropriate Yarnangu could be very successful because they were able to work with young people according to long-standing behavioural expectations.

5. The Yarnangu could organise the teaching of the young people and achieve worthwhile outcomes as long as they could take leadership in organising the venue, teaching methods, objectives, and the way in which the program was to be evaluated.
6. The Yarnangu did not appear to want to be involved in the classroom program because they felt that the classroom represented the Walypala sphere of teaching, knowledge, processes and behaviour.

Following the documentation of the minutes and hypotheses associated with the 'Work' theme, I shared my thoughts with Bernard Newberry (audio-tape interview transcribed into journal entry, 27 November 1994, pp. 312-313). He listened with increasing interest as I read the entries, and my first thoughts were that I had misunderstood what had happened and would have to rewrite the entries:

**Jim:** Have I misunderstood what happened Bernard? You look surprised at what I've written. Maybe I should have another go.

**Bernard:** No, what you've written is good. I just never thought that the teachers felt that we [Yarnangu] had been working on school business. I thought we were doing family business, adults telling the young people what's right and wrong. There's no secrets in teaching then?

**Jim:** Bernard, there's nothing secret about teaching children. Teaching is simply the sharing of knowledge and experiences in a way that has been carefully thought out. The Walypala teachers want the Yarnangu to share important skills and ideas with the young people. In fact, you mob do it [teaching] better than we, because the children respect you more.

Bernard sat in thought for a long time. Then he said:

**Bernard:** Maybe we should have more Yarnangu train to become teachers. Maybe we can do the teaching better than white people. But then maybe the white people can work with us.

While the example of the 'Work' theme was a positive aspect of the school-community partnership because it exposed some of the 'secrets' of teaching, it must be stated that, by the time the study concluded, the area of formal curriculum development and implementation remained largely in the hands of the Walypala teachers. This was because most of the teaching and curriculum processes occurred in the classroom away from where the Yarnangu felt comfortable. It may be hypothesised, therefore, that because the community was not involved in curriculum development and implementation, the Yarnangu students were not able to achieve their best because only Yarnangu teachers would have known what the students needed and been
able to share with them the aspirations and passions of the community.

In concluding this section, it is worth renewing a number of important questions about ways to create a school-community partnership in curriculum development that would be on the same level of sophistication as the political partnership that grew between 1992 and 1994:

1. Is it relevant to expand the influence of Yarnangu culture in the school, beyond observing certain important rules of behaviour?

2. Would it be possible to expand Yarnangu influence over the methods, processes and structures involved in the learning process to make it possible for Yarnangu students to view Walympala knowledge and concepts from their own cultural and cognitive standpoint?

3. Is there a body of common knowledge that exists between the community and the school and can that common ground aid in catering for the different learning preferences of students?

4. What is the best model of teacher training for the Ngaanyatjarra Lands?

4.6 The impact of change, particularly the development of the Parents' Council, on community members

4.6.1 Introduction

This section focusses on the way in which the development of the Parents' Council was received by community members and particularly highlights the conflict that emerged between those who were affected by the change process that started in the school and flowed into other sectors of the community. I will suggest that a surprising aspect of the study in developing the school-community partnership was the effect that it had on relations between the Yarnangu and Walympala teachers, and the non-school Walympala employees in the community.
By way of introduction, the impact of the changed relations between the Yarnangu community and the school on some other sectors of the community had extremely negative effects. It disrupted relations between the school and non-school Walypala, resulting in conflict and significant acts of disruption. The target of most of the criticism and conflict was the Reference Group and this led to considerable emotional stress from time to time as members of the group were placed under significant pressure by some Walypala employees.

It is clear that there was a rapid rise in the activity and effect of the Parents' Council particularly during 1993 and 1994. The development of the council saw an increased attendance at meetings by community members and a vigorous exchange of ideas and discussion between participants. This greatly influenced the way in which relations between all sections of the community developed during the period of the inquiry. It is a reasonable hypothesis that the profile of schooling and related issues were raised in Warakuma and the lands following the formation of the Parents' Council and this also caused the Yarnangu and Walypala to reflect critically upon their attitudes towards community development in the district and their roles in that process.

The result of personal reflection was positive in the case of the transformation that occurred within the teaching service, but was extremely negative within the group of non-school Walypala employees. What happened to the relations between the Yarnangu and the non-school Walypala may be summed up in a statement by McClay (1988, pp. 275-76) with reference to the effort by Aboriginal people at Lajamanu to gain ownership of traditional land areas:

That white economic interests will continue to override Aboriginal aspirations unless the whites cede some of their power, and this will not happen unless Aboriginal people are able to 'force' change. The conflict that is at the heart of Aboriginal affairs could not be clearer.

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the effect of the emergence of parental control in Warakuma school on various individuals within the community. The impact of the transformation on other communities is considered in section 5.3.
4.6.2 The effect of changed relations on the teachers

The teachers ceded decision-making power to the Parents’ Council in order to achieve what Malin (1989, p. 122) says is “a transformation in the status quo within the culture of the school”. They gave up the power that came from being a member of the dominant and most powerful group within the community and redefined the term ‘legitimacy’ by allowing the Yarnangu to start creating the context in which control should take place.

When the notion of change in the governance of the school was introduced, however, the teachers were cautious about what a shift in the balance of power would mean to their status and authority. They were initially opposed to any challenge to their position of dominance. One debate that occurred at a staff meeting (journal entry, 20 February 1992, p. 14, transcribed from audio-tape) included this exchange:

Steve commented that my ideas were too extreme.

Steve: Look Jim, this is all a bit hard to take. There’s no way that I’ll accept an Aborigine employing me in the school. I suppose that I’ll have transferred by the time any of this comes in though.

Jim: What's so wrong with all of this Steve?

Steve: I can't see how some Aborigine who isn't a trained teacher or some other professional can select me, direct me and even sack me. I'm happy for them to come into the school and do culture stuff and I really want to be friends with them, but running the school is going a bit too far.

Rebecca: Yea, I'm with Steve on this. I want to be free to do my job without unqualified people looking over my shoulder. I mean, what do the Aborigines know about education? Most of them can't read or anything. So why should they have important jobs and run the place?

Jim: Well, I'd really like to give it a go. I'd like to see the Aboriginal people have the same chance to be involved in their school as the white people can. I mean, what 'white' school doesn't have its decision-making group and P&C [Parent and Citizens' association]? Surely moving in the direction the Education Department want us to go cannot be wrong if 'white' schools have had the parent involvement for so long.

Steve: Yeah, but it's different up here.

Jim: How is it so different and anyway, should it be so different? Isn't that
part of the problem education has had up here for so long? Teachers think working up here is not quite teaching. They don't expect the children to learn anything and many teachers just wait their time out and look forward to transferring to some place where they can start real teaching.

Steve: All right, we’ll give it a go because I also think that the teaching up here so far has been pretty average. I also don’t want you to think that I think that the Aborigines are dumb. I guess I’m just a bit worried about what will happen if Aborigines start running the school. I’ve never been down this road before.

The views expressed by the teachers in February 1992 were consistent with the hypothesis that dominant groups are reluctant to surrender power and operate within a framework where traditionally oppressed classes control the nature of their work or employment status. This initially left me alone within the Walypala teaching staff to initiate the change process.

Following discussions with the teachers in a variety of contexts during 1992 and as a result of the unexpected and significant impact of the parent meetings, the teachers swung their support behind the change process. In a brief discussion I held with Steve following a meeting of the Parents’ Council and recorded on audio-tape (transcribed into journal entry, 11 April 1993, p. 109), he commented:

Steve: Today’s meeting was great. Over the past few months, I have noticed that the numbers of parents coming to meetings has increased a lot. I have also noticed that the people are starting to talk back and give their opinions. And I reckon maybe, the Aborigines might have something important to contribute to the school.

I’m not backing down from what I have said all along about untrained Aborigines running a complicated school like Warakurna, but maybe we can train them and then they can take up some important jobs.

Jim: What sort of training do you think the people need?

Steve: Teacher training is important. I mean, look at Beryl [AEW]. She’s ready to train after having virtually been a teacher for the past four years. Bernard is a person who could do more. He is a very enthusiastic worker and just needs some training in administration. There is a lot of potential out there. The hardest thing will be to get the training facility or service into the Lands. We’ve got a lot out of the new way of running the school especially in getting parent support to get the kids into school [moving from a 30% non-attendance rate in semester one 1992, to less than 5% in semester one 1993]. We need to build on that start and set up something
that will be good for the Yarnangu and the Walypala in the future.

The teachers observed the Parents’ Council attempting to resolve a number of concerns (as determined by the teachers) and so hypothesised that it was worthwhile supporting the council to ensure the betterment of their working conditions. That is, the teachers supported the change in school governance because they felt that it enhanced their working conditions.

In a school development meeting given over to a review of the effectiveness of the Parents’ Council (audio-tape recording; Minutes of school development meeting, 8 August 1994), the teachers drew upon a number of events and anecdotes that helped them reach conclusions that supported the work of the council. Jeremy, for example, made it clear that he felt that the significant increase in student numbers at the school and the decline in non-attendance was largely due to the work of the Parents’ Council:

Our numbers have gone through the roof. They have skyrocketed at the same time that the council has been working. I mean, I have seen Garry [community chairperson] come up to my room and literally throw his two kids in. As he said to me recently, “How can I spend half my time in the office at the school but have my kids walking around the place?” Also, have you noticed that on council meeting days, any non-attenders suddenly front up again and keep coming for a long time afterwards? And remember when Cynthia Burke was ‘dropping’ her boys [throwing rocks at them] outside the school gates to get them come in and shouting that she couldn’t come to [council] meetings if her boys didn’t come to school?

In another example of the positive impact that the council had had on the school, Rebecca suggested that:

The council has evolved from a few meetings with a few parents. I know that the beginning of the parents’ thing was a bit rough and we wondered whether it was ever going to get anywhere. But has everyone noticed that the school has been left alone for two years; you know, no damage to the place?

I came from K__ and I know what another Lands’ school feels like. But this school is so different. The gardens are so neat and there is never any vandalism. But not just that, no one even draws on the school [graffiti] like they do in almost all the other places.

And one more thing, if someone from another community comes here and starts ‘dropping’ the place, the kids are around here are quick smart to tell us. And don’t forget that Squeezy is always watching the school and shouts at anyone who gets into mischief.
But when he's not there the kids still leave the school alone.

There is a positive feeling towards the school. Some of it comes from us, but most of it comes from the council, the parents. They're always here and we're not.

Because the school development meeting became a case of teachers taking turns at giving examples of the strength of the Parents' Council, I asked Steve if he could give any instances where he felt that the influence of the Parents' Council was particularly apparent. He replied:

I sort of agree with Rebecca about the tradition that has evolved in the school. When I think about it, tradition is like what we can all expect certain situations and events to turn out like. For example, Rebecca has talked about the vandalism issue. We expect, for example, to come back from holidays and find the school and houses safe and undamaged.

One example I have been thinking of is that I can ask some people to help me in some way and they generally will. I can't get anyone to help me in the teaching bit, but they'll come out camping with the kids and they'll give me lots of ideas on bush activities. I have also appreciated the help that the council has given me in the post-primary area, especially in trying to establish a closer link between the community and the school. It's not their fault that the work experience project flopped [see section 4.6.2].

I'd like to see the parents become more involved in the school in the curriculum but that's another matter. Joma says that the Yarnangu need more training before they can work in the curriculum area. However, I think we need to look at ways in which we can make the people feel more comfortable in a teaching situation because they have so much to offer and they know how to reach their kids in a way that we white fellers can't.

As the meeting proceeded, I noted that the teachers felt as though they had developed life-long friendships with some of the Yarnangu and that the genuine friendships had assisted in fostering a sound school-community relationship. The informal link between the teachers and the community is discussed in section 4.3.

As a summary of the effect of the operations of the Parents' Council on the school, the teachers drew the following conclusions:

1. Daily attendance had increased from an average of 24 in semester one 1992, to 73 in semester one 1994. Teachers were no longer having to follow-up on students who missed school. This was because the council chairperson had taken it upon himself to patrol the comm-
unity every morning and deliver recalcitrant students to the school.

2. Vandalism to school premises had declined to a marked extent. This was because a council member who lived adjacent to the school became the volunteer night watch. Being the traditional land-owner upon which the community was located, this person was greatly respected and young people in particular obeyed his directions.

3. There were signs of increasing *Yarnangu* support for school programs, particularly those that occurred outside of the school premises.

4. Issues to do with schooling had a high profile during community discussions.

5. Teachers believed that their quality of life had improved as friendships with the *Yarnangu* developed. There was also a perception that there was a free flow of mutual support and encouragement between school and the community.

6. There was a general perception that the *Yarnangu* could make a positive contribution to the teaching, consulting and administration of the school.

The comments by the teachers clearly supported the function of the council and, without that support, there would probably have been limited dialogue with the community during meetings and the teachers would not necessarily have been prepared to implement the decisions of the meetings. The teachers, therefore, played a significant role in promoting the importance of the Parents’ Council.

To summarise the role of the teachers during the time of the development of the Parents’ Council is to note that their support in response to the shift in the balance of power between *Yarnangu* and the *Walypala* within the school was a significant factor in determining the confidence and growth of the council. Teachers learned to expect positive change from the actions of the council and appeared to be optimistic that any deficiencies that might exist from time to time would be
4.6.3 Impact of change in school governance on non-school Walypala

Walypala employees in non-school sectors were affected by flow-on effects as changes in power relations between the community and the school encouraged significant Yarnangu individuals to look at taking practical control over other community services and functions. The increasing leadership shown by the Yarnangu upset long-established authoritative structures that had been in the hands of Walypala and many Walypala felt a personal affront at the Yarnangu insisting that they could run their own affairs better than them. It was hypothesised that a new model of consultation between the groups based on mutual respect needed to evolve.

Some Walypala stated that they would not work for the Yarnangu and so they actively resisted efforts to shift authority to the Yarnangu (journal entries, 7 November 1992, p. 105; 13 August 1993, p. 151; 9 December 1993, p. 170; 5 February 1994, p. 172; 14 May 1994, p. 227; Minutes of community executive meeting, 12 July 1994). Rather, they saw their role as controlling particular activities within the community and employing the Yarnangu who occasionally wanted to work under their authority. To have the Yarnangu ask questions and express an interest in being involved in the decision-making processes was foreign to the experience of some Walypala and presented a scenario that they viewed with concern.

The generally defensive response from all non-school Walypala employees appeared to be due to their perception that their traditional role may no longer be consistent with the new demands of the community. The behaviour of these employees can be seen in the following vignette (audio-tape interview following the incident, 20 June 1994, p. 247):

The traditional landowner of Warakurna (Wally Porter) called the Walypala employees, other than the teachers, together and told them, “You fellers need to understand that we have to work together, going the same way, and not with you blokes being bosses over us”.

He took the shopkeeper’s file and held it up. It was a black clip file with white note paper attached to one side.
"Now this file here is a black file with white paper on it. Look at it this way (the white paper was on the top of the black file). This is the way you [Walypala] want it all the time. You want to be on top of the [Yarnangu] people. Now look at the file this way [and he held it up sideways or on its edge]. The white paper you write on, that’s you mob, and the black file, that’s us, are side-by-side pointing the same way [held away from his body]. Now that’s how we got to be. We got to be equal together, you know, and going the same way, not this fighting with each other and having white people trying to be on the top all the time. You’re not the bosses anymore."

Wally Porter was attempting to show the Walypala that they had to appreciate the need to reconceptualise their manner of interaction with the Yarnangu. He was trying to tell them that they had to change. He was further trying to explain that the Yarnangu could not be the ones to change even though, historically, they were the ones who had had to compromise and who had been manipulated by the Walypala.

Unfortunately, the effort by Wally Porter to explain the notion behind attempts to adjust power relations between the Yarnangu and the Walypala was unsuccessful. It did not appear to change the attitudes of a number of people and there was little progress in developing a sincere partnership between the Yarnangu and the non-school section of the Walypala community based on the principles of negotiation and consultation. An example of the separateness of the Walypala and the Yarnangu and the entrenched domination of the Walypala over the Yarnangu is shown in the following vignettes (journal entry, 25 October 1994, p. 301):

Last night, the petrol sniffers broke into the shop and did considerable damage. The shopkeeper immediately closed the shop on the order of a significant Walypala employee. The employee also insisted that the roadhouse be closed, including fuel sales, and requested the Giles weather station not to sell any food. The shop was closed for the day. The operation of the community has ceased. Everyone is being punished for the actions of a few. The muscle and power of the Walypala is being exercised and the Yarnangu are being treated as though they are naughty pets who must be chastised.

I feel sure that no Walypala employees will go hungry today, but most of the Aboriginal section of the community will have very little food. It’s not right and, while this sort of behaviour makes me angry, I restrain myself because it is up to the people to decide the future of their employees, and I must allow them that right.

A further example has already been provided in section 4.3.2 and concerns a meeting that was held to discuss the health of the Yarnangu. In summary, this meeting managed to reach conclu-
sions on behalf of the community without any Yarnangu involvement at all. Walypala individuals managed to criticise the parenting skills of the Yarnangu. They publicly discussed a woman’s diabetes and endorsed the sale of low-alcohol-content beer against the wishes of the Yarnangu. All of this was done either before the Yarnangu had arrived at the meeting or while they were observing what was happening. Any comment made by them was ignored and they were even talked over by the louder Walypala. The resulting frustration saw an individual threaten to spear the store manager if he did not stop selling beer and served to reinforce the myth held by some Walypala that Aborigines are an ‘uncivilised’ people because of their need to resort to violence to resolve problems.

Some of the Walypala directly blamed the actions of the school council for what they saw as disruptions to the operations of the community. The following journal entry (recorded as the event occurred, 4 May 1994, p. 120), for example, reports on an executive meeting of the community to which I was summoned and highlights the development of significant tension between the non-school Walypala and the Reference Group:

I approached the community office not knowing what I had been called for although I knew that it wouldn’t be nice. For a long time now, I have had sour relations with a few significant non-Aboriginal employees in the community and many other white people just tolerate me. Thank goodness for a supportive group of teachers.

As I came up to the outer office, Thomas came storming out. He stopped me and said, “Don’t worry uncle, he [a certain significant non-Aboriginal community employee] has no heart. Speak up to him and he will back down.”

I was very concerned as I entered the office. Fourteen Yarnangu sat with the Walypala employee. The employee and chairperson [Garry] sat in chairs and everyone else was seated on the floor. I took my place on the floor.

Being prepared to give the employee the benefit of the doubt, I approached the executive meeting with a positive attitude and so brought paper and my diary. As it turned out, the paper was useful in order to record the meeting.

The Walypala employee spoke, “Well Garry, shall we get started?” Garry sternly nodded towards the Walypala and said, “It’s your meeting, not mine, so say your piece.” The Walypala cleared his throat and started:

“We are all living in a small community and we have to get on with each other. Some people have to look after the shop, some have to look after the office, and some have to work in the school. We all have our jobs to do and we should support each other. Now, for some time, Jim Heslop has been undermining me and other white people living here
and has been stirring up trouble for the rest of us. This is not good enough and has to
stop. White people have to be loyal to each other out in these places. I want Jim Heslop
to stop his stirring and to stay in the school area. Let the other white people look after the
rest of the community business. That’s what I’ve got to say.”

I felt a combination of anger and despair at the comments made by the Walypala, but
decided to allow him to create his own trouble. I asked, “Exactly what have I been doing
to undermine you and the other white people? Have you got any specific things that I’ve
done or are they just vague notions?”

The Walypala answered:

“They’re just vague notions, but you’re a communist and are trying to upset everything
in this place. You’re trying to stir up the mob and you should know that these people are
not civilised like those up north. They need white people to help them.”

Squeezy sat next to me and muttered in Ngaanyatjarra that he was going to spear him and
put him on a plane for Perth. Bob commented that the Walypala was insane and that we
should feel sorry for him. Ivan left the meeting simply claiming that he had been
humiliated. Everyone else looked at the floor except Milton who glanced at me and
smiled broadly. While being surprised and astonished at the comments of the Walypala,
especially since he knew that I was recording them, I was also worried that Ivan would
return with his spears and physically harm the white feller.

Fortunately, what could have been a tense and even violent meeting, turned into a joke as
the Yarnangu began to talk about the probable sexual inadequacy of the white man in the
seat. The Walypala did not know what was being said. I was amazed that he had lived
here for nearly four years and was unable to speak a word of Ngaanyatjarra.

I broke the silence and stated:

“If you are only worried that I am a communist, then I’ll add that to the other insults
from you and let it go. I came here hoping to enter into a discussion on the development
of this place, and we have spent all the time listening to you express your worry about
whether I have been undermining you. Perhaps you should start listening to what the
people are saying and stop thinking that you know what’s best for the Yarnangu and
hiding in your house for so much of the day.”

The Walypala made no comment in reply and began to show signs of uneasiness when
the men started to whisper in Ngaanyatjarra. I think he had guessed that the proceedings
had gone badly for him and that he had failed to censure me or whatever he wanted to
achieve. He hissed at me, “Since you started this bloody council rubbish, you have let
the blacks try to run this place. It’s your fault. Let them run your school, but keep them
out of my business. All the council business is crap”.

The meeting broke up and I left quickly, desiring to get back to school. No one remained
in the office. Garry went to find Ivan and make sure that he wasn’t gathering his spears
and a group of about ten Yarnangu followed me to the school office.

The following notes were recorded immediately after the discussion that was held between some
of those who had participated in the meeting in the community office (journal entry, 4 May 1993, p. 121). Part of the conversation that occurred in the school office is of relevance at this point:

“I’ll put the cup of tea on”, said Milton. “Then we can talk evil against him [the Walypala employee] some more.” Everyone laughed.

“Why don’t you guys sack him?” I asked. “Why don’t you get rid of him?”

“I’d spear him”, said Marshall. “But then I’d go to jail again and I’ve only just got out from bashing my wife when I was drunk”.

“We already have done something about him”, said Bruce. “We’ve turned our backs on him and we are waiting now. Something will happen and he’ll have bad luck, maybe soon, maybe later, but he’ll pay for what he has tried to do to us mob. Right now, we have to take the hard words and break through the fences he sets up.”

The incident with the Walypala employee further confirmed my hypothesis that many Walypala were unwilling to hand over decision-making power to the Yarnangu. It also led me to hypothesise that the Yarnangu were aware of their disadvantage and lack of control over their lives. Finally, I hypothesised that many Walypala believed that they were doing what they thought was best for the Yarnangu even though this never involved any consultation.

In view of the inability of the non-school Walypala to work in partnership with the rest of the community, I hypothesised that many Walypala who came to the community had little background in working with Aboriginal people, were fearful of their new situation, and did not know how to interact with the people. They also worried about their capacity to do the job properly in the light of numerous demands, particularly for financial accountability, and so they reacted by imposing reactionary measures that established themselves in an autocratic position. An example supporting this hypothesis is shown in an extract from the transcript of an interview with two non-school Walypala employees (audio-tape interview, 2 December 1992). One respondent commented that:

The mob [Yarnangu] have to be controlled. If they like you then you must be doing a poor job. It has been our responsibility [his wife and him] to rescue the community from financial ruin, and we’ve had to tell the people that the easy life is finished.

We make all the decisions here because, when the people did it, they stuffed the place right up and almost drove it to bankruptcy. They kept looking after their family group.
Now we've fixed it up and we will not let the people back in to mess it up again. If that means that no one likes us, then tough luck. I don't need them to be my friends. When we leave here, there will be eight new houses, a swimming pool, a grassed lawn, a new Women's Centre, and the start of a new shop. The people should be grateful to us for all of that.

The Walypala respondents took over most of the responsibilities from the Yarnangu shortly after they arrived. They made all of the financial and enterprise decisions and planned the structural development of the community according to a clearly determined schedule. They interacted with the Yarnangu only on the basis of purpose and function and actively resisted the building of relationships based on quality and meaning.

As if to further reflect the separateness of particular non-school Walypala employees from the community, one person was warned by a lawyer for the Ngaanyatjarra Council (Minutes of a Reference Group meeting, 8 July 1994) that if he did not start to do his work in the community office, as opposed to working from his home, and establish regular opening hours, he would be dismissed. The people needed to be able to have contact with the employee and this was not possible when he stayed in his house and refused to answer the door. Many Walypala employees saw it as their right to deny the Yarnangu access to decision-making processes, maybe in order to present a financially sound position to the agencies to which they were accountable. A consequence of this action, however, was a perpetuation of the historic denial of Aboriginal people's ability to control their own lives, particularly in how they were permitted to interact with non-Aboriginal people.

A further consequence of the attitude of the non-school Walypala to the Yarnangu at Warakurna was that the Walypala had no commitment to train any Yarnangu in community enterprises. They viewed such action as a threat to their control over community policies. I do not think it unreasonable to hypothesise that, because the Yarnangu were offered little training and were denied access to employment, they were economically and socially dependent on the Walypala financial managers (earning less than $70.00 per week on CDEP payments) and experienced frequent periods when they were financially indebted to the community, as represented by the Walypala employees. It may be further hypothesised that untrained and unemployed Yarnangu
were less likely to protest at the behaviour of the *Walypala*, because they found themselves trapped in a cycle of reliance upon the *Walypala* and found it difficult to exercise their theoretical rights to make decisions on community issues.

It is useful at this point to give an example of the effect that the *Walypala* had in putting up barriers to the *Yarnangu* taking on decision-making authority in the community (journal entry, 15 May 1994, pp. 228-229):

During the period of this study, there has never been a financial statement issued to the community. When I asked Frank* [a significant *Walypala* employee], he commented, “Well, they can’t understand finance and so what’s the point in producing a statement” (journal entry made immediately following the conversation, 10 December 1993, p. 170).

Today I noticed the significant *Walypala* employee driving from house to house. This is unusual because the person doesn’t normally drive to the *Yarnangu* side of town and certainly doesn’t go out of his way to speak to the people. I thought nothing more of it until Bernard came down in the afternoon. He was quite upset and said, “Brother, Frank* is saying that Albert* [the relieving shopkeeper] has stolen over $60 000, and that we should have trusted him more than we trusted Albert*. I’m very upset.

I was also concerned and answered, “Well, it’s worth us finding out about this matter, because it’s a lot of money. But remember, Albert* is a mate [of ours], right, and you always trust your mates.”

Bernard nodded and replied, “You’re right. I worked Albert* out early on, and during his three months I found him to be an honest and straight man. It might be Frank* telling lies again, so I’ll wait and see if he calls the police.”

I took the matter further and said, “Bernard, you have a right to see financial accounts and statements for this community. You have a right to ask Frank* to show you where the money has disappeared from. Go and ask him.”

Bernard replied with a sense of frustration, “Brother, I haven’t had that sort of training. I have no choice but to believe white people. Until we have *Yarnangu* trained to do the books, it will always be easy for the *Walypala* who want to trick us.”

As it turned out, the former store keeper hadn’t stolen any money. Rather, Frank* appeared to want to denigrate the relieving store keeper who had worked well with the *Yarnangu* and who had introduced a number of well received initiatives in the store.

*Walypala* opposition to the *Yarnangu* assuming control of their affairs may be explained by the reaction of individuals to specific circumstances, such as Frank* who was faced with resolving the severe financial situation of the community when he arrived in March 1991. Another reason
may be the effects of long-standing myths that surround Aboriginal people and that many non-Aboriginal people held to be true. Negative terms and labels that have historically been applied to Aborigines allowed the Walypala in Warakurna to believe that the Yarnangu were incapable of running their own lives let alone the affairs of the community.

An example of the application of derogatory labels to the Yarnangu by Walypala employees is shown in the following brief examples (some of which have already been referred to in other contexts):

Frank* notified me this morning that no “blacks” [his term] were to go into “white” [his term] houses because it was creating a precedent that would allow the “blacks” to think that they could enter anyone’s house. His fear is that the “blacks” are dirty, have no regard for personal property and have lots of children who will fill the house (journal entry, 7 May 1994, p. 217).

Frank* mentioned that he was very disappointed that no one turned up at the tractor driving course he had organised. I recommended that, if he told me about any future courses or workshops, I would personally ask Yarnangu individuals to turn up.

He answered that there would be no point in me asking people personally because the Aborigines weren’t interested in becoming educated. “They just want to run around in the bush and bleed the white community for all they can get” (journal entry made immediately following the interview, 18 August 1993, p. 152).

The swimming pool was opened this morning, and, what two community Walypala employees thought would bring them congratulations, resulted in a day of violence and angry accusations.

The ATSIC representative who opened the pool glowingly commented on how wonderful it was that the Aboriginal people had allocated $120 000 of their CDEP wages to help build the pool. As soon as the opening ceremony was completed Thomas, Mr Lewis, Bob and a number of other adults started to abuse the Walypala employees who organised and oversaw the construction of the pool. The talk was rapid, but I clearly heard them say that the Yarnangu had not been consulted about the arrangement for them to contribute their wages to the pool. I also heard them say that they would have preferred to have lower prices in the shop rather than the swimming pool.

I left the angry mob but later saw the Walypala employees retreating to their home with a group of Yarnangu led by Bernard following them and rebuking them in English and Ngaanyatjarra.

The Walypala felt that they could control specific aspects of the lives of the Yarnangu and did not respect them sufficiently to consult on important issues (journal entry made following the event, 2 December 1993, p. 171).

Old Mr Giles went missing this afternoon. His wife has gone to ceremonies and poor Mr
Giles misses her. He has decided, I think, to walk to Docker River. I have driven along the roads a little bit looking for him, but I suspect he’s gone through the bush in the straight direction towards Docker River.

Anyway, Lyle Giles (the son) went to the shop and asked the Walypala assistant if he could help in the search. The shop assistant was quite dismissive about the problem. It was reported to me by Lyle, that the shop keeper commented that the missing person was an “old codger who would probably die soon anyway”. The shop assistant apparently went on to describe Aborigines as uncivilised and preferring the bush to “proper living”. The result of the shop assistant’s discourtesy was that Lyle Giles punched him and now faces police charges (journal entry, 24 October 1994, p. 300).

To summarise the patterns of Walypala behaviour revealed by the examples, many Walypala employees were dismissive of the Yarnangu culture and saw it as being unable to satisfy the needs of the people. The examples also show that the Walypala were sometimes personally abusive to the Yarnangu but still proclaimed that they knew what was best for them. They treated this section of the population in a way that was dismissive and patronising, but saw no ethical problems with such behaviour. Finally, the labels applied by the Walypala to describe the Yarnangu were not an accurate representation of the people because they were founded on flimsy evidence that had been gathered according to ethnocentric beliefs.

The Walypala at Warakurna approached their interaction with Aborigines from the perspective that Aborigines needed ‘developing’ and ‘civilising’. The Walypala frequently expressed the belief that the Yarnangu could not take on the same sort of responsibilities as them and if a new position of authority became available in the community, a Walypala would have to be employed. For example, when the swimming pool was opened (2 December 1993), a Walypala was employed to look after the maintenance. When the Women’s Centre opened (September 1994), a Walypala was brought in to coordinate the activities. When the Walypala project officer arrived, his wife was employed to attempt to open the play group again (December 1994). Between 1992 and 1994, there was no business function of the community that was totally governed by the Yarnangu and they had little say in community decision making. All decisions were made by Walypala employees (journal entry, 10 December 1993, p. 171). What all of these actions implied was that power was the sole domain of the Walypala and the Yarnangu could be manipulated and directed. In other words, the term, ‘Aboriginal development’ had a Walypala
construct which did not necessarily represent the aspirations of the Aboriginal community.

I do not wish to be dismissive about the difficult role that many Walypala employees attempted to fulfil. While being called on to train and induct the Yarnangu into the running of community enterprises, there were financial and other accountability mechanisms that the Walypala had to satisfy. The Yarnangu themselves were also realistic about their capacity to run the affairs of the communities and accepted that an outside bureaucracy often drove the conduct of their employees. At a meeting in Warburton regarding the role of the newly-formed Yarnangu-controlled mining and enterprise company, for example, I recorded the following conversation between two of the most prominent men in the Lands. The capacity of the Yarnangu to run their affairs was being discussed (journal entry made at the time of the conversation, 17 September 1994, pp. 290-291):

Derrick*: It's time to get rid of the white people. Let's kick them out and do the jobs ourselves.

Lionel*: How can we do that? Look at what happened in S__ when they did that. The communities went broke and the Anangu who ran the place, pocketed the money and looked after themselves and their families. We need some white people to help us make a stand against people who want to break the rules.

Derrick*: Well, I want a job. I keep asking everyone for a job, but I never get one. I am smart and I can do the job, any job.

Lionel*: Derrick* ... we need the Walypala to work with us and not as our bosses. We need the Walypala because lots of our people think only for here and now and for their own families. We need help to think for the future and to be responsible for the whole community. We need the right Walypala who can bring up the business people in our communities. We also need some Walypala to work with us because too many of the Yarnangu do not take responsibility for what happens when they make decisions. We blame others and say that someone else coaxed us into trouble. We need a few Walypala to help us learn to make the right decisions. And we need the Walypala because running a community is tough and you need to be very smart to talk the right language and know how to do the jobs. Not many of us have the right training yet.

Derrick*: I don’t want white people telling me what to do all through my life. I’m not a silly one you know.

Lionel*: No. We don’t want Walypala telling us what to do, but we need the right Walypala working with us and we need to tell them where the work is
and them to tell us what is going on in the outside business that we have
to do. We need to understand what our problems are. We need someone
who will tell us when our ideas are not possible, maybe illegal and maybe
against the rules of the country. We need help to clear up our thoughts
and not let us make mistakes. That’s what [Walypala employees] were
meant to do in the first place, give us advice. Now lots of them just chase
after money for themselves.

Derrick*: Well let’s train the people and start moving the Walypala out in a little
while.

Lionel*: That’s a big problem. I mean, there’s lots of training now but no one
shows up. They call for training and then turn their backs when it is
offered.

Derrick*: That’s because we have to go away for training and we get homesick and
worry for our families. Training that happens in Alice Springs or Perth is
not real training.

Lionel*: That’s true and we have to work on getting a training building here. But,
when the training is offered in the Lands, no one goes along. That’s
because we don’t do things by ourselves. We like to go together and do
things together. That’s why we never say that we will do the training. We
point to others to do it and they get ashamed.

Look, we’ve to teach people that training is part of our culture and so
everyone will do it. Right now, only one or two people go for training
and no men because we don’t like to stand out. And our boys leave
school for business [ceremonies] and forget about training. We Yarnangu
have to try to change some things in culture, or we will never be able to
run our own communities.

Lionel* was a significant Yarnangu and, in this discussion, revealed his foresight by suggesting
that the Yarnangu and the Walypala had to work in partnership under the umbrella of Yarnangu
authority, at least in the short term. He accepted that the Yarnangu could not dispense with the
help of appropriate Walypala but, unlike many Walypala advisory staff, he did not see that their
role had to be dominant and autocratic. He also highlighted a number of cultural factors when
examining the impediments to greater involvement by the Yarnangu in running the communities.

4.6.4 The changing beliefs of the Yarnangu

An important objective in establishing the Parents’ Council was to create a school that would
reflect the range of aspirations of the Aboriginal community through the operation of community-
directed programs. A key strategy in meeting this objective was to involve the council in a wide variety of decision-making processes that would direct the operations of the school. These processes included:

1. Political activity in negotiating with largely Walypala groups and individuals about the structure of schooling in Warakurna. The outcomes of negotiations were intended to be consistent with the views of the Parents' Council.

2. Awareness-raising within Yarnangu and Walypala groups in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands in order to clarify the goals of the Yarnangu in regard to schooling and training.

3. Involvement in some aspects of curriculum development and implementation in the school and the belief that local Yarnangu must be trained as teachers.

4. Informal leadership training of the people to assist them to develop and communicate the concepts of schooling that they felt were appropriate to achieving the ideals of Aboriginal people in the Lands.

These processes illustrate the variety and depth of interest of the Parents' Council in working towards governing school operations in Warakurna and as a repudiation of the recent history of the exclusion of Aboriginal people from such control. The change in Yarnangu relations with the school was not peripheral or symbolic, but was a fundamental challenge to the nature of schooling and the processes that helped to construct it. The commitment to pursue change came about as a result of early activity of the council which highlighted the long-standing unequal power relations between the Yarnangu and Walypala groups. It also suggested an hypothesis that locally based or external Walypala were unable to bring about the sort of changes that would benefit the Yarnangu or resolve problems within the Lands.

As already mentioned, because the school council was almost entirely blamed by some Walypala for causing conflict that occurred within the community during 1993 and 1994, it is hypothesised
that the school council had a significant impact on the social and political order of Warakurna. The rise in conflict imposed a great deal of stress on members of the council and particularly on those who were also members of the Reference Group. When the process of rapid change is seen from the effect that it had on individuals who had never held positions of power and had been forced, in the past, to endure positions of subjugation and disempowerment, it is not surprising that there were times when individuals felt frustrated, confused, bewildered and even crushed. While members of the Parents’ Council, especially the Reference Group, were heavily criticised by some of the Walypala and had periods of extreme despair and disappointment, they generally maintained a positive outlook, particularly as they saw some early realisation of their aspirations for the development of Aboriginal-controlled schooling in Warakurna and other places.

The despair felt by the Yarnangu in the face of opposition from powerful Walypala individuals and groups did not diminish the determination of council members to achieve a more equitable sharing of power. As an outcome of the opposition, the Parents’ Council became an increasingly sophisticated organisation and assumed a significance beyond the context of school governance in one community. For example, it influenced the manner in which schooling was being conducted in other Lands’ communities and some members became involved in setting up a business enterprise group to establish control over “sandalwood forestry, emu and ostrich farming, and indigenous art” (Seymour, 26 August 1994). This organisation was set up in the face of opposition from the Ngaanyatjarra Council. Three members of the Reference Group were also part of the business enterprise and Bruce passionately explained his feelings about the new opportunities during a brief audio-taped interview (transcribed as a journal entry, 23 September 1994, p. 291):

For me, when I got back from Arnhem Land, I started to see what the Yarnangu can do. I could see what other Aborigines were doing and decided that we have to do it as well. Yarnangu have to be in charge or we will be like things that are fought over by white people. Look at what happened at Tjirrkarli. White people spent all the time talking over our heads about racial stuff but the school stayed closed. I don’t think the white people cared less whether there was a school at Tjirrkarli or not. They just wanted to fight each other.

Now I realise that the Walypala also run a lot of the Ngaan. Council and we just turn up
to hear how we must feel and what we must be wanting to do [Bruce’s emphasis]. The Council took a wrong turn a while ago and now, if we want something, we might just have to abandon the Council and set up our own. The Walypala on the Council won’t back down. You know Jim, the school council and this research has shown me that there are some Walypala who just don’t want things to change out here. They say nice words while all the time making buckets of money out of my people and nothing improves.

Now, if the Yarnangu want mining, isn’t it our business? If we want to set up businesses here, isn’t it up to us? Why should some white people fight with us over it? Aren’t whites here to help and do what we tell them? Or are they here to run our lives? I am getting really fed up with the white people who pretend to know what the Yarnangu want. I am fed up with having a white person in an important position telling us what to do and pretending to know how we feel. And I don’t like the Yarnangu having to work out some back door way of doing business so that we don’t upset the white man in charge.

So I went down to Perth in July [1994] with the others and we set up a company to train our people, do business in the Lands, and not to sit around and wait for someone like a new government to come in and take what they want without giving us a chance to get the best out of it first.

I have to stand up now and put up with the people who tell me that I am just trying to make money for myself by letting miners work my land. I have to put up with those who say that I am just thinking about now and have no thought for the future. I have to put up with those who think evil in their hearts.

Now you write it down like I’ve said it and tell the Walypala that they should stop trying to run the place and should step back and listen instead.

As a result of having the Parents’ Council move towards governing the school, the identity of the members became very positive. The strength of the comment by Bruce about his perception of the need for the Yarnangu to have control over their own affairs and to seize it if necessary, is one that I did not ever expect to write when I commenced the study. The involvement of Yarnangu in the school through the Parents’ Council had a profound emotional impact on individuals. The process of change assumed its own dimension and moved in a number of directions such as the establishment of the enterprise group in direct opposition to the Ngaanyatjarra Council. As Herbert Howell stated in an audio-taped interview (4 November 1994):

I have noticed over the past few years that more Aboriginal people have become involved in decision-making functions throughout the Lands. It’s hard for me to say that the Parents’ Council at Warakurna has caused it because I live in Warburton. But I do think that the council has been a wonderful development and has provided a unique opportunity for the Yarnangu to take on more responsibility and accountability for their
lives. I'm also glad that the Walypala haven't just moved out and left the whole job to the Yarnangu because there will always be a job of some sort for the Walypala.

A significant aspect of this study was tracking the change in the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of the Yarnangu participants in the school as various initiatives were implemented. It may be hypothesised that the locus of impact on individuals with the development of the Parents' Council was in the areas of faith, commitment and self respect. It may also be hypothesised that the operations of the council allowed people to act with integrity in a new institutional setting that protected their interests. The concepts that began to redefine the self-image of many people included self-determination, self-identification, self-management, and participation. As a result, there was increasing community dissatisfaction with the Walypala who used autocratic methods in order to implement a personal agenda for community development.

In observing the change in the attitudes and practices of the Yarnangu at Warakurna, Bob Somerville (superintendent, Kalgoorlie Education District) stated in a written personal communication (11 August 1994):

In spite of problems we've had in various communities lately, and in spite of misunderstandings that have occurred from time to time, everyone in the Lands is talking about education and doing things about it. Education has become a priority to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and they [Aboriginal people] are beginning to take control over it. A lot of the reason behind the strong image of education is because of the work of the Warakurna Parents' Council.

One important feature of the change in behaviour that occurred through the development of the Parents' Council was that Yarnangu leadership was strengthened. Even when Yarnangu governance over school functions in Warakurna and the Lands was very much in its infancy, the active leadership of Bernard Newberry and others began to create a context in which the term 'school governance' could be defined and described at a Lands' level. The Reference Group quickly embraced the aims of the study and committed themselves to encouraging the Yarnangu to become more involved in the school and establish a structure that would allow Aboriginal people to make decisions regarding the provision of schooling services throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Ideas and strategies that members learned from their visits to other communities were useful in helping design an effective decision-making process. Members of
the Reference Group decided not to assume official positions within the Parents’ Council because they realised that they had a commitment to the Lands as a whole and did not want to compromise their activity by focussing on just one location. The role of the Reference Group in the development of Lands’ schooling is examined in Chapter Five.

The Parents’ Council was constituted to include only Yarnangu office-bearers and incorporated ASSPA funds in its budget. Walypala teachers saw themselves as offering advice and stimulating dialogue and ideas, but took no part in achieving consensus or voting. In other words, decisions about the directions of the council were totally in the hands of the Yarnangu. The role of informal decision-making processes also became an important feature of the work of the Parents’ Council (section 4.3).

Leadership by appropriate Yarnangu achieved the aim of encouraging the whole community to be involved in making decisions that represented the values and aspirations of the community. Bernard Newberry summed it up in this way (audio-tape interview transcribed into journal entry, 14 June 1993, p. 169):

> Now that we have regular proper meetings, we need to make sure that everyone [Yarnangu] is involved and can have a say. Some people, especially the old men, won’t come to the school meetings but they talk at other times and in other places and their ideas are listened to. If we don’t listen to them, then any decisions that we make will be short term and will not work.

> So, it is important that the meetings are run by Yarnangu and work in Yarnangu ways. You [Walypala] must stand back or else you might confuse and mess up what we are trying to do.

4.6.5 The battle for decision-making authority in Warakurna

As already mentioned, the resentment felt by certain Walypala employees towards the Reference Group was profound. The strong paternalistic sentiment shown by these people meant that they believed that the Yarnangu could not look after their own affairs and that a decision-making system based on Walypala dominance was most appropriate. The Walypala were sincere in their belief that they were doing the best for the Yarnangu and were caring for their immediate
interests. Therefore, they showed great surprise which later turned to outrage when the people they thought they were caring for turned against them and began to fight to gain the right to achieve goals of their own design, not necessarily in line with the perceptions of the Walypala. A specific example which gives some sense of the ‘battle ground’ in Warakurna is contained in the following vignette (journal entry, 9-10 December 1993, pp. 170-171):

As part of an effort to gain some knowledge of the financial position of the community, a community member, Thomas Newberry, wrote to the coordinator of the Ngaanyatjarra Council (26 November 1993), requesting that the coordinator act to direct appropriate Walypala employees at Warakurna to make monthly financial statements available for public scrutiny. Mr Newberry also requested that the office be opened more often so that the Yarnangu could check on the day-to-day processes of the community and so that he could conduct his business as a liaison officer for a mining company. The Ngaanyatjarra Council contacted the non-school Walypala employees at Warakurna and requested that they address the issues contained in Thomas Newberry’s letter.

The result was that the storekeeper immediately resigned and refused to open the shop. Christmas food orders from Perth and Alice Springs were suspended. In a comment to my wife, the storekeeper said:

“The people can starve for all I care. The shop won’t open again until I get an apology from the people, especially Thomas Newberry. And I want the parents’ thing disbanded because you, your husband, and all that mob are just a bunch of gossipers and communists! (recorded immediately following the statement, journal entry, 9 December 1993, p. 169).”

Another significant non-Aboriginal employee also refused to work until he received a formal apology from Thomas Newberry and the community. I was criticised for being the cause behind all that had happened. One prominent Walypala employee said (journal entry, 10 December 1993, p. 170):

“You’ve stirred up these people to cause trouble. Don’t you realise that these are a backward people, not like those up north. They can’t handle their own affairs. They need white people now and will need white people to do things for them for many years to come.”

In an abusive phone call, followed by a visit from the Walypala who had control over the store, I was told that I was a ‘blackmailer’ and that the individual could have got an apology and a wage rise if the Parents’ Council had only stayed out of the affair (journal entry, 10 December 1993, p. 170):

“These people [the Yarnangu] can’t run their own affairs. They only think they can. When we [the Walypala employees] came here, this place was a financial disaster. Food and money was being given away and the community owed over $100 000 to wholesalers. It will be generations before these people can run their own affairs. As we’ve said many times before, you have to control the mob out here and if they like you, then you must be doing a bad job” (journal record of the conversation, 10 December 1993, p. 170).
The Reference Group for this research project met in my house following my conversation with the *Walypala* employee (journal entry, 10 December 1993, p. 170) and contacted the coordinator of the Ngaanyatjarra Council to report on the situation at Warakurna. The coordinator informed the community that Christmas orders would be placed by the *Yarnangu* shop assistants, and the keys to the store should be handed over to Parents’ council representatives.

Another *Walypala* store keeper-trainer was subsequently employed (8 February 1994) pending the total takeover of the store management by the *Yarnangu*.

From this example it is clear that many of the *Walypala* employees who were involved in the events that occurred in the period before Christmas 1993 viewed the *Yarnangu* as easy to manipulate. To develop this point further, the decision-making system that existed in Warakurna at least between 1992 and 1994 was devised by a *Walypala* employee who referred to it as “being best for the people” and “enabling the business of the community to occur smoothly and efficiently”. Although the method of decision-making was described to me in an interview at the end of 1992 (12 December 1992, journal entry, p. 172), subsequent events, such as the incident just described, indicates that the decision-making process was applied throughout the period of this investigation.

Decision-making was based on the *Walypala* being in control of the important functions and structures of the community, particularly those that were related to finance, resourcing and physical development. Only in areas affecting traditional business were the *Yarnangu* allowed to make the important decisions. Traditional business included arranging social activities, organising ceremonies, accommodating decisions regarding mining into community beliefs and practices, and making decisions concerning the movement of vehicles on community business. The *Yarnangu* were excluded from making decisions regarding the use of resources that were allocated to the development of the community to achieve their aspirations. The result was growing solidarity on the part of a group that became frustrated and angry at being denied their rights.

With the conflict over the running of the shop resolved by January 1994 when a new store keeper-trainer was employed, the *Yarnangu* turned their attention to the management of the
swimming pool (journal entry, 21 February 1994, p. 178).

In February 1994, the *Yarnangu* swimming pool manager was dismissed by a *Walypala* employee, because some of the *Walypala* thought that the pool and its surrounds were not clean enough. The replacement pool manager (*Walypala*), however, rarely opened the pool and, when it was open, certain *Yarnangu* were banned for vague and confusing reasons, people could only go swimming if they were wearing appropriate costumes, and smoking was not permitted in the pool surrounds.

As a result, some patrons became very angry and worked through members of the school Parents' Council to ensure that a *Yarnangu* replaced the *Walypala* pool manager. With support from ATSIC officers, objections from the *Walypala* to *Yarnangu* management of the pool were overcome and the pool was won back by the *Yarnangu* community during a meeting with ATSIC officers on 14 April 1994.

Resentment by the *Walypala* concerning the perceived role played by the parents' council in community affairs increased, however, because a shift in the balance of power from *Walypala* to *Yarnangu* hands in the school was seen to be the initial cause of the dissension at the store and, later, at the swimming pool. The tension increased in March 1994, when the new Women's Centre was opened and the *Yarnangu* insisted that a certain female *Walypala* employee have no involvement in it.

The rapid shift in the roles of various individuals were difficult for some *Walypala* to accept and incidents in relation to the store and pool demonstrated that some *Walypala* passionately believed that the *Yarnangu* could not control the fundamental aspects of the development of their community. As mentioned in previous examples, some *Walypala* claimed that they had financially rescued the community and could take all the credit for the structural development of the place. The question that seemed worth asking during the battle over the shop and the swimming pool was, "Did the *Yarnangu* want that type of development in the first place?" I discreetly asked community members, Mira and Ivan that question on 18 December 1993 (audiotape interview, 18 December 1993; supported by journal entry, p. 172), and their answers are summed up in the following vignette:

We had a meeting near the telephone box and quietly discussed the on-going problems with the shop, the swimming pool, and the recent erratic behaviour of the *Walypala* workers. I asked Ivan if he wanted all of the buildings that were being planned and pointed in the direction of the new swimming pool. I suggested that everyone must have felt grateful to the *Walypala* that they had organised the building of a swimming pool.

Ivan smiled at me and said:

"Why should we be grateful? All the work they [the *Walypala*] did is no good to us. No *Yarnangu* was asked if they wanted a pool. In fact, Mr Heslop, we wanted lower prices
in the shop, not a pool. When we found out that the shop money was going to help pay for the pool [the shop profits and unpaid CDEP wages fully funded the pool], we had a meeting and told the Walypala to stop the pool idea and lower all the prices in the shop. They ignored us. Now let me tell you what will happen to that pool because we were not listened to by the Walypala. The children will drop the pool anyway like [throw rocks at the building]. When people get angry they will drop the pool and smash all of that expensive heating stuff on the roof and then we will get into trouble. The Walypala will go around and call us all the names under the sun because we haven’t been looking after the pool and they will say, ‘What wonderful people we are because we have given you mob a pool to spend your days in, but you are ungrateful and lazy bludgers’.

But no one ever asks us what we want. No one believes that there are some things that we want that do not include buildings and machines. And if we say anything, we get ignored. So I sit here at my house and I know what will happen and I know that there will be fighting with the Walypala, and I know that the Walypala will feel that we are silly because we do not say, ‘Thank you for this wonderful thing you have given to us.’ They will just think we are wild and lazy and can’t keep our family under control when they go and drop the pool.

Listen uncle, the pool would be really cared for if we [his emphasis] mob had decided to build it and had been part of deciding all about it and had worked on it. Look at the school now. When was the last time any damage happened to the school? Maybe two years ago. Maybe more. [A rare event of some damage to a classroom occurred only three days before this interview. Nevertheless an interesting perception of Yarnangu affiliation with the school]. But the shop gets hit by the axe, the office is dropped and chopped all the time, the clinic gets drawn on by people, and now the pool will be dropped, you know?

Why uncle? Because we own the school. It is part of the community and we tell the kids to get themselves out of the school because they are damaging my property, Mr Shepherd’s property, Mr Porter’s property, Mr Newberry’s property and everyone’s property. That’s why the school gets left alone. It’s our property. When that boy, you know his name, made that hole in the classroom wall [he appeared to remember the recent incident that caused the school to be damaged], we all came over and sat down and found out who the boy was who did the damage. We were all ashamed and his family paid for the fixing up.

But not the pool. We don’t own the pool [he waved his hand at the pool in a dismissive manner]. The children will go swimming but they won’t care about it. What we really want is the prices to be lower so the old people can buy their food and not have to go hungry.

But the new road sign that we worked together to put up, that’s different. We all helped make it at the school and the old men gave permission for it to go up near the creek. Now, no one has touched the sign. No one has drawn on it or touched it. They have left it alone because they did the work.”

As a final point in this section, evidence exists that the views held by some Walypala employees were also reflected in the behaviour of representatives of organisations who interacted with the
community from time to time. There were instances, for example, where external groups had come to Warakurna already having made the decisions about what was best for the people. According to Ron Santen, a former community advisor (written personal communication, 3 April 1993), this may be why the community underwent three town planning reviews between 1980 and 1992 and so left the community littered with sites where development had commenced but had then ceased pending a decision to shift the town again. He blamed:

Well meaning and idealistic white representatives of government authorities making up their mind first and then getting the local people to agree with their proposals regardless of whether it is what the [Aboriginal] people wanted or not.

He hypothesised that:

Many outside organisations, including ATSIC, come into Warakurna and talk to the wrong people. They talk mainly to significant white employees and other people who have the loudest mouths and, as a result, do not necessarily leave with the true views of the Aboriginal people (also mentioned in discussions with Squeezly Porter and John Richards in section 4.4.1). A final point that I should make, is that some visitors to the community do not have good listening skills. They either want to get out as soon as possible and so listen in a superficial manner, or do not understand the hidden signals that Aboriginal people are giving”.

The way in which the behaviour of visiting Walypala officers tended to support the paternalistic attitude of the Warakurna-based Walypala is shown in the following example:

The Department of Community Development (Northern Territory) visited Warakurna (September 1991) to look at introducing more of its services. The nature of those services was decided upon by external Walypala officers in collaboration with Walypala community employees. None of the projects, like the play group, have been successful and funding has now been lost to the community. Perhaps if at least the initial discussions had involved the Department of Community Services, Walypala community employees, and appropriate Yarnangu, then the projects would have been more successful because they would have been more in keeping with the needs and aspirations of the people they were meant to serve.

4.6.6 Conclusion

The effect of commencing to shift power from Walypala to Yarnangu hands in the school at
Warakurna changed Walypala-Yarnangu relations within the community as a whole. Some prominent Walypala employees found it very difficult to accept that the Yarnangu wanted to make their own decisions and control the implementation of others. In a short period of time, there was a strong move to vary some Walypala employment decisions and to adjust them so that the Yarnangu could take over some traditional Walypala functions. Walypala employees were also expected to train the Yarnangu and prepare them to assume control of community roles.

While the defensive and even outraged response of the Walypala was directed towards members of the Reference Group, many short-term results were positive in the way that the Yarnangu were prepared to assume involvement in community affairs so quickly and against so many historic and situational barriers. They were also prepared to take strong action when they observed incidents that they perceived to be unacceptable. I personally expected the results of establishing a school-community partnership to be less dramatic. For example, I did not anticipate the strong reaction by some Walypala to the demand by the Yarnangu that the changes within the school be extended to other sectors of community operations. Although the tension and conflict were personally very stressful and did not diminish over the period of the inquiry, the early results led me to conclude that the process had been worthwhile.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE EFFECT OF THE WARAKURNA PARENTS’ COUNCIL ON SCHOOLING THROUGHOUT THE NGAANYATJARRA LANDS
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The initial purpose of this research was to investigate the sort of partnership that the Yarnangu might like to establish with the Walypala teachers in the school at Warakurna. A number of extensions to the project occurred, however, particularly in the way that the Parents' Council came to champion greater Yarnangu authority in the operation of the community, such as the shop, swimming pool and women's centre. It is perhaps understandable then that there would also be interest by the Reference Group, and supported by the Parents' Council, in assisting the development of community interest in the provision of school services to other Lands' communities (see sections 4.1, 4.2.3).

It is important to note that, at the conclusion of this investigation, many of the initiatives in taking the Warakurna experience to other communities were in their infancy, having only commenced early in 1994. The effort to share the news that the Yarnangu could have a valuable role in schooling came about in response to some violent and disruptive incidents in other communities and due to the belief held by the Parents' Council that all Yarnangu in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands should be able to exercise their right to participate in the schooling process.

In section 5.1, I will show how the work of the Reference Group influenced the Education Department to establish a formal, though largely unwritten relationship with the Parents' Council. I will also show how the Reference Group sought to raise the profile of schooling throughout the Lands in response to a number of incidents that occurred during the first half of 1994. The way in which these incidents were handled showed that there was a need for strong local control over the development of schooling.

Section 5.2 will examine the Principal Consultant's position and the effect that it had on the participants in schooling within the Lands. I will particularly emphasise the apprehension felt by
Walypala principals about the creation of the position because it was seen by them to be the forerunner of Yarnangu control of schooling in the area. I will also show how the consultant’s position included the Yarnangu in formal planning and decision-making processes.

In section 5.3, I will highlight the effect that opposition and conflict from throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands had on members the Reference Group. I will suggest that a number of critical events occurred close to each other and impacted heavily upon the emotional and physical well-being of members of the Reference Group.

In section 5.4, I will discuss the Yarnangu aspirations for the future of schooling in the Lands. I will outline the nature and authority of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands’ School board and suggest that the medium-term future for Yarnangu control over schooling services in the Lands is promising.

5.1 The enlarged role of the Reference Group in developing schooling in other Lands’ communities

It is worth noting the reaction of external agents, such as the Ngaanyatjarra Council and the Education Department, to the development of a school-community partnership at Warakurna during the course of this investigation. The agents had to respond to an increasingly active Lands-based authority that could interpret policies in a way that was appropriate to the needs of the area and also to act as a liaison group between communities and outside agents.

It may be hypothesised that external agents responded to the growth of parent decision-making in Warakurna in two ways. First, some agents who influenced decisions made for the Lands appeared to be reluctant to release their power entirely according to the principle that decisions should be made in the local area. Rather, they attempted to redefine reality within certain limits and retain their dominant position through the imposition of the core of their former ideology upon the Yarnangu.
One incident which seems to bear out this hypothesis will be briefly recounted. A senior Education Department officer displayed his reluctance to encourage the devolution of decision-making responsibilities to parent groups within the Lands (written personal correspondence, 1 November, 1993). The officer addressed a meeting of the Warakurna Parents' Council on 21 August 1993 (audio-tape recording; supported by minutes of Warakurna School Parents' Council) and, in answer to a Yarnangu question regarding the future of parent involvement in schooling in the Lands, stated:

I am not in favour of parents having a stronger say in the conduct of schools in the Lands. I do not believe that the schools up here are able to develop a sound decision-making structure that would be able to support the advancement of learning outcomes in students.

In most non-Aboriginal schools, parent groups keep a close eye on the way schools are run and some parents have great skill and knowledge in issues to do with education. I believe that it is my role as [description of his position] to monitor progress in this area closely ... [section removed at the request of the respondent] ... Therefore, I want to watch the schools closely and I am not prepared, at this time, to encourage parents to become significantly involved in school decision-making processes.

The officer was also reported as saying, however, that "it is my dream to see operational control of schooling in the Lands become a reality in the near future" (Australasian Post, 25 June 1994, p. 32). He urged school principals and myself, as Principal Consultant, to develop a plan to move communities towards being stronger in the development of Yarnangu involvement in schools (section 5.2).

Second, it may be hypothesised that some external agents attempted to shore up their decision-making power in the Lands because they perceived that no one else wanted that authority or desired to influence the direction of schooling in a particular way. In other words, there was no consensus on the nature of power sharing between Walypala organisations and locally-based Yarnangu. The application of decision-making authority from distant centres, however, was unsatisfactory to the extent that the decisions that were made were not necessarily in keeping with the mood in the Lands and were not consistent with the aspirations of the Yarnangu.

For example, as mentioned in section 4.2.3 in the case of the closure of Tjirrkarli school, the
Education Department invited members of the Parents’ Council to work with the Tjirrkarli community to resolve the problem, but then proceeded to engage in an exchange of letters with the Ngaanyatjarra Council and some other individuals to cast doubt upon the future of the school. The Reference Group felt that this action prevented a speedy resolution of the problem at Tjirrkarli by undermining the delicate job they were doing in attempting to reconcile families.

A further example of the way in which external agents compromised the development of a strong school-community partnership in the Lands is seen in the following example (audio-tape recordings and journal entries, 4 April 1994, pp. 189-191):

Mike* [Lands’ principal] rang this morning and advised that he was crouched on the floor of his house in fear of his life. He explained that the school Toyota had been attacked by some Yarnangu and that the people had ‘gone wild’. He was frightened and didn’t know what to do. I explained that he should close the school immediately and evacuate the teachers to Warakurna. I would meet him here with the Reference Group and we would discuss the problem. Mike* was also advised to phone the superintendent in Kalgoorlie and report the incident.

Later this morning, the teachers arrived at my home. I examined the school vehicle and noticed that the front window had been shattered and there were a number of axe blows to the driver’s door. Members of the Reference Group came over as soon as they saw the teachers arrive. They were shocked at the vehicle damage and stated that they did not feel that the people were capable of such violence. We retired to my house and started to review the incidents that led to the school being closed. In brief, the violence appears to have developed when the principal became involved in family business and made aggressive statements regarding certain individuals.

The Reference Group listened to Mike* and asked a number of questions. They suggested that, in future, he stay out of family business and let the problems that caused his anger be resolved in non-aggressive ways. Then they left and promised to phone the community to find out more details. It was not considered prudent to go to there for a few days.

Two days later, the school staff and three members of the Reference Group drove to the community and organised a meeting. It took three hours to get the Yarnangu together and the Reference Group members had to walk about the houses calling and persuading the people to come together to resolve the matter and to put the violence behind them.

I minuted the meeting which was held on the verandah of the Womens’ Centre. It was an extremely tense affair and, at one point, I retreated behind a wall when two men challenged each other, one with a spear and the other with a knife. Bernard Newberry stood in between the two men holding onto a rake and slowly scraping the ground. He did not make eye contact with either protagonist but made the following short speech in Ngaanyatjarra [recalled on audio-tape on the way back to Warakurna]. He said:
"I have travelled a long way to talk to you men. You men are important people in this community and you have the chance to help run the school. If you show yourselves as people who fight and shout all the time, then the Education Department will not trust you and the school will always be in the hands of the Walypala."

Mike* spoke to the meeting and apologised for getting involved in something that was not his business. I spoke about the importance of setting up a strong school-community partnership and the Reference Group spent a while talking about issues like petrol sniffing. The Yarnangu from Warakurna also tried to sort out family divisions that had occurred in the community. One group believed that they should support the Walypala teachers at all costs and the other group maintained that the family must always come first.

Later in the afternoon, I was called by Mike* to the phone and a senior officer in the Education Department informed me that he intended to close the school for six months "to teach the community a lesson". I mentioned that the Reference Group had resolved the problem in a way that was satisfactory to all parties and that closing the school was not appropriate in the current circumstances. The officer said that the Reference Group was a "loose collection of Aborigines" who could not be held accountable [according to his perception of accountability] should the school reopen and the violence recommence. I explained that we had gone to a lot of trouble over the past few days to negotiate a "happy ever after" solution and that his actions would probably undo our hard work.

He repeated his concern about the violence recommencing and his responsibility for the duty of care of teachers. I responded that the people were not normally an aggressive group and that I was confident that violence would not recur. The officer reluctantly agreed to allow the school to reopen but made it clear that he would be extremely unhappy if the violence reoccurred and promised firm action if the teachers were placed under threat again. I did not share this discussion with the Yarnangu because I knew that they already felt that outside agents were less than useful in developing schooling in the Lands, even those who were meant to represent the Aboriginal people.

The officer was concerned that decisions made in the Lands were not backed up by an accountability mechanism. The "loose collection of Aborigines" was not sufficient to satisfy the officer that the Yarnangu were ready to accept the power to make decisions. He did not feel that there was any authority in the Lands capable of making decisions and then enforcing them. It appeared to the senior officer that no locally based individual or group involved in the consultative process was actually capable of owning problems associated with schooling. The officer also appeared to ignore the value of involving Yarnangu who could use their intimate knowledge of the families and their problems to reach a satisfactory resolution. As a result, the decision made by the officer from a considerable distance did not bear any reflection on the issues apparent in the community and he did not appreciate the capacity of Aboriginal people to implement appropriate conflict resolution procedures. It was likely that the officer's decision that the school remain closed would have inflamed an already tense situation at the community.

The Lands' school incident as well as the on-going problem at Tjirrkarii, seemed to indicate that senior representatives from the Education Department were keen to devolve power to Lands
schools in theory (as commented to the Australasian Post, 25 June 1994), but then deny it at the practical level (also in Bindarriy, Yangarryn, Mingalpa & Warlkunji, 1991, pp. 163-164). This behaviour confused the Yarnangu, who wanted to believe the words of the Walypala, but frequently felt let down by actions to the contrary. Bernard Newberry, in particular, felt confused and let down because it appeared as though no one was listening to him in his capacity as the Education Department's Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO). He did not know what he could do to resolve the problems in the Lands if he lacked support from his employer. He frequently expressed feelings of disappointment to me. For example, on one occasion (audio-tape interview transcribed into journal entry, 10 May 1994, p. 227), Bernard met me in the Warakurna school office and complained:

So often I drive to a community and find out from the Yarnangu or a Walypala some silly thing that the Education Department has said or written. I arrive at W__ and find that the Department is going to remove a classroom from that school. I go to J__ and find that the second teacher's house is being shifted to another community. Then I travel to W__ and find out about the latest fight between [a significant Walypala employee] and the [senior Education Department officer]. I feel like a fool. Have I got the right to make decisions or not? Am I trusted by the Department or not? I feel like resigning because I am told off by the Yarnangu for what people living in Perth are doing and the Education Department ignores me and goes over my head when making decisions. I find that I have no respect in my job.

I agreed with Bernard about his concerns and shared with him that I was also often ignored and had to battle to make Education Department officers listen to my recommendations. I was not sure what could be done but suggested that the Ngaanyatjarra Lands was being spoken about in very negative terms by senior officers and that the Lands was considered to be incapable of conducting its own affairs.

Within two weeks of the Lands' school incident, the school at Tjirrkarli was officially closed following the refusal of the Walypala teachers to return to the community after the April vacation (section 4.2.3). The Yarnangu went through the frustrating exercise of attempting to resolve a serious matter in the community while the Walypala in the Ngaanyatjarra Council and the Education Department argued on the themes of racism and power. Once again, Bernard expressed his frustration to me (journal entry, 5 May 1994, p. 216) and made it clear that the Walypala, regardless of whom they were meant to be working for, were not prepared to allow
the *Yarnangu* to have any real power in governing the schools in the Lands.

It was at this time (about five weeks after the closure of the Tjirrkarli school) that the Principal Consultant's position was created (June 1994). The nature of this position and how it emerged will be discussed in section 5.2, but it should be noted that I was appointed to this position. The roles fulfilled by Bernard and me became very similar and we often travelled together and attended the same functions. The frustration felt by Bernard and me was that we felt like tokens and intermediaries being used by various externally based *Walypala* organisations and that our position existed to make it easier for these groups to conduct their non-negotiated business. May and June 1994 were extremely frustrating and demoralising moments. The only bright light was that there was a strong Parents' Council operating in Warakurna that supported our work.

Bernard, Garry, Bruce and I began to spend more time together (Ivan spent June and July 1994 in Wiluna following a bereavement) discussing ways of convincing the *Walypala* that the *Yarnangu* could take control of their own affairs in regard to providing schooling services. Garry summed up the mood of the time when he commented (audio-tape interview transcribed into my journal, 19 June 1994, p. 246):

> I often wonder what we are doing all this for. I think, "Why not just pull back and worry about our place, Warakurna?" I think, "Why do we take all this trouble from the Education [Department], the principals and all the others?" And then I say to myself, "Cogi [Garry's Ngaanyatjarra name], we belong to all the Lands, not just Warakurna and so we must share the good news to them." But, right now, I feel as though wherever I look, there's trouble and I sometimes want to turn my back.

The despair felt by the Reference Group and, therefore the Parents’ Council, was further heightened during May 1994. Most Lands’ schools were visited by senior Education Department officials to promote sound public relations between the Department and the Lands. Having spent a week visiting communities and holding meetings, the visitors provided information, including photographs, to the *Australasian Post* magazine without knowledge or approval from any *Yarnangu* or *Walypala* living in the Lands. The information was then published in the 25 June 1994 edition under the title,*Wild Child West?*
The four page article contained many misquotes, unauthorised photographs and superficial overviews of schooling in the Lands and life for the teachers. The Walypala and Yarnangu in the Lands were initially shocked and surprised that senior officers from the Education Department would grant an interview to an outlet such as the Australasian Post. Subsequent feelings of extreme anger and betrayal were conveyed to me, as the Principal Consultant, and I was grouped with those who wrote the article. A telephone conversation I had with a significant Walypala employee in a Lands' community provides a valuable example of the feelings of people in the Lands following the publication of the article (recorded following the conversation in journal entry, 26 June 1994, p. 250):

Doug*: Jim, this bloody article that you mob have written is diabolical. How could you do such a thing?

Jim: Doug, I have only just heard about this. I had no idea that the visitors who came here a few weeks ago could ever do such a thing! I never knew that my bosses would talk to a gossip magazine. I don't even have a copy of the magazine yet.

Doug*: Well it has set relations back years and years between the communities and the Education Department.

Jim: I understand that you are upset Doug but I also know that you and the Education Department have been arguing since the Tjirrkarli business about all manner of things. This is just another problem. Let's try to keep a reasonable perspective.

Doug*: What perspective, Jim? This article has gone all over the damn country as well as New Zealand, and has made the Aborigines out to be a backward, violent mob. Read the bloody thing and start with the title, "Wild Child West?". The article has been sensationalised and I intend to take it further, starting with the Ngaanyatjarra Council and a few state politicians.

Doug* hung up at that point.

The Australasian Post article caused appropriate Yarnangu, including members of the Reference Group, to take a number of steps, mainly through the agency of the Ngaanyatjarra Council. Those steps included:

1. A request to speed up the rate of devolving operational control of schooling to the Lands (written personal correspondence, 25 July 1994).
2. A protest that the depiction of Aboriginal people in the article was negative and therefore contrary to recommendations [non-specified] of the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody report (1993).

3. A proposal that students be withdrawn from all Lands' schools for one term.

4. An investigation into whether the Yarnangu could legally prevent some senior officers of the Education Department from visiting communities in the future.

Bernard Newberry sat with me in the office and threatened to resign because he saw the article as forcing him to take sides with the Yarnangu or with the Education Department. He felt that he could not show loyalty to his employer and also be a community member. He also wondered about the future of our study but did not expand on that issue. In a pithy statement concerning his feelings on the matter, Bernard said (audio-tape interview, 30 June 1994):

That article [Australasian Post] has set back relations between the Education Department and communities maybe eight years. We are learning not to trust the Education Department anymore. The Walypala teachers here [in the communities] are good people and we like them. But we don't like the mob who come in here for less than a week and then tell everyone in Australia and around the world about our secrets [a reference to a description in the article of some aspects of the traditional life of the Aboriginal people in the Lands].

He did not resign from his job, but he did refuse to attend an ALO's conference in Perth as an act of protest.

Although the period between June and July 1994 was a time of despair and disillusionment for the Parents' Council and the Reference Group, it did crystallise a number of long-standing issues that existed between the Walypala and Yarnangu, particularly in regard to the sharing of power and the unwillingness of the dominant group (Walypala) to cede power to the subordinate group (Yarnangu). It was hypothesised that only the Yarnangu could effectively govern themselves and resolve problems because only other Yarnangu could fully appreciate the issues that were of concern to them and then implement appropriate remedial measures.
For example, in the Tjirrkarli incident, when it became apparent that the Walypala were not attempting to reopen the school, but were operating to inflame the situation, the Reference Group wrote a letter to the Education Department focussing only on the issues at Tjirrkarli and attempting to rectify community problems. I framed the letter, in consultation with Bernard Newberry (6 June 1994) and, within a week, approval had been received from the Department to reopen the school, although initially as an itinerant service operating three days per week.

We did not expect overwhelming congratulations from the warring Walypala groups, but certainly did not anticipate condemnation from members of the Ngaanyatjarra Council because the best we could do was to reopen on a three day a week service with a vague promise of a full time service recommencing at the beginning of term three (July 1994). The reopening of the Tjirrkarli school as an itinerant program intensified the war of correspondence between the Ngaanyatjarra Council and the Education Department. The response from various officers of the Department centred on the theme that, if the Ngaanyatjarra Council did not start behaving in a way that was consistent with their expectations and also ensure that they provided a safe working environment for the teachers, then the Minister for Education would look at permanently closing a number of schools in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

The positive response from the Education Department to the letter sent by the Reference Group expressing regret at the violence in Tjirrkarli and promising to set up structures to ensure that the problem did not recur, helped to encourage the Yarnangu to believe that direct action could have a positive effect. The breakdown in relations between the Education Department and the Ngaanyatjarra Council also opened up a power vacuum so giving the Reference Group the chance to establish its credibility as a vehicle for promoting Yarnangu authority over school operations.

The group decided to publicly display themselves (particularly Bernard Newberry and myself) as the key decision-makers in regard to schooling matters in the Lands, and proposed a three-year strategic plan that would see all operational and political matters devolved from outside of the Lands to a local board. We hypothesised that there was a group of Yarnangu who were
sufficiently interested in the development of schooling to be able to participate in an authority that would be able to make appropriate decisions in regard to schooling matters.

Posters were produced and sent to each Lands’ community announcing that, if anyone had problems relating to schooling that could not be resolved at the local level, then they should contact either Bernard Newberry or myself before communicating out of the Lands to the Kalgoorlie District Education Office. Bernard stated, at a meeting of the Ngaanyatjarra Council (10 September 1994), that the Yarnangu were working towards setting up a Schools’ Board for 1995 (journal entry, 10 September 1994, p. 307). The reaction to the posters from communities was very positive, but local principals strongly objected to what they saw as a threat to their decision-making authority because they felt that they had not been sufficiently consulted about the content of the posters. The reaction of the principals to the community liaison function of the Principal Consultant will be further discussed in section 5.2.

Our first action following the assertion of the Reference Group’s role in the Lands was to request the Education Department to recognise the improved situation at Tjirrkarli and to reopen the school on a full-time basis, rather than restrict schooling to an itinerant service. At the beginning of September 1994, the school was duly allocated two full-time teachers. The Reference Group was ecstatic at this development and the gloom of earlier months was lifted even though we recognised that tension in the Lands in regard to schooling still existed in the Yarnangu and Walypala sections of communities.

The reaction by officers in the Kalgoorlie District Education Centre to the steps made by the Reference Group to establish Yarnangu control of schooling was positive because it was seen by them to allow what they saw as trivial problems to be dealt with at the local level. There was no acceptance, however, of the proposal that the Lands become an independent education district. The Ngaanyatjarra Council gave its approval to the proposal (8 June 1994) and sent letters to each principal requesting that they show similar support as part of their role to enhance community development. Although support was not forthcoming from the principals, there was a sense that opposition from principals was not going to stop a process that was becoming
increasingly driven by a groundswell of Yarnangu passion. It was also thought by the Reference Group that principals could not strongly object to a proposal that had already received at least partial endorsement from their senior officers.

In summary, the rapid development of the Reference Group to the point where it could play an effective role in the provision of schooling services to the Lands reinforced a fundamental hypothesis of this inquiry that only Aboriginal people could represent the aspirations of other Aboriginal people and so enable school-community development to occur in an appropriate way. As Herbert Howell said to me (audio-tape interview, 15 November 1994):

I am not a Yarnangu. I have lived in the area for most of my adult life, but I am white and will always be white. I have a skin grouping and a Yarnangu name. I speak Nganyatjarra better than most Yarnangu, but I am white. I have a different background. That means that I will never really understand what the Aboriginal people go through and appreciate the impact of their history. That’s why the best people to work with Aborigines are other Aborigines whether it be in education, health, mining, or anything.

5.2 Development of the Principal Consultant’s position and the role of the Reference Group under contract to the Education Department

As mentioned in section 5.1, the activity of the Parents’ Council and particularly the Reference Group encouraged senior officers within the Education Department to create a position of Nganyatjarra Lands Principal Consultant (Aboriginal Education), and invited me to take up that position.

The position description for the Principal Consultant was written by an Education Department job content expert in consultation with the Reference Group and reflected the work that members had been doing for some time. The functions listed in the position description form (June 1994) included:

1. Establishing effective school development plans, in consultation with principals, that reflect community needs.
2. Conducting research and policy development which relate to the education of children in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

3. Reporting as necessary on aspects of educational delivery in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

4. Negotiating with schools and communities in order to resolve crises.

5. Liaising with outstation communities, and the Ngaanyatjarra Council, to ensure that council and Education Department policies and directions are met by government-controlled schools.

6. Acting on behalf of the district superintendent on issues relating to schools in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands; their operations, administration and curriculum delivery.

In the letter accompanying the position description form, Peter Frizzell (Director of Operations, 20 May 1994) wrote that:

Members of the Reference Group of parents at Warakurna School have been undertaking a somewhat similar role, out of goodwill, in addition to their current roles [as members of the Warakurna School Council and non-school commitments].

The letter went on to say that:

The decision will be well received by the Minister, the Kalgoorlie District, the Lands' Council, the Lands' communities and, most importantly, our employees in the desert [a central office presumption referring mainly to the Walypala teachers and principals]. I believe we should move on this quickly and suggest that no further contact is required with the Minister's Office. His last words were, "get on and do it".

When the position was formally announced, it contained no direct reference to the consultant working in association with any Yarnangu. The Reference Group decided, therefore, that it needed to determine a role for the Yarnangu as soon as possible in order to maintain its position. Negotiations were immediately opened with the Kalgoorlie District Education office and, as a result, the value of the Parents' Council was formally recognised by the Education Department
and a budget of $8,000/year for contract salaries of Yarnangu workers was released in October 1994.

At the time of concluding this research (December 1994), the specific functions of the new positions (consultant and Reference Group) were still evolving, but the Reference Group was strongly committed to using the consultant’s position (I was replaced for 1995), along with Bernard Newberry’s ALO role, as a foundation for implementing a three-year strategic plan for the development of schooling in the Lands (see discussion in section 5.4.2 and Figure 5.4).

Although the position of Principal Consultant was created in the last six months of the research, it is worthwhile reviewing how the consultant was received by the Yarnangu and Walypala interest groups.

5.2.1 The Walypala principals in the Lands

The creation of the position of Principal Consultant was poorly received by the principals in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands but generally welcomed by teachers. The principals launched a collective as well as individual attack on the position and on me as the incumbent. This was because they felt that there had been no consultation with them on the nature of the position and because of my selection for the role. In a letter written to me (copy to the superintendent), one principal (17 June 1994) informed me that I was “an inappropriate person to take on the position because of your close relationship with Aboriginal people and your well-known agenda of promoting community involvement in schooling”. The Ngaanyatjarra Lands Principals’ Association wrote to the superintendent complaining that I would be used in roles that [were] not appropriate to their (the principals’) needs and that I would encourage unwise Aboriginal involvement in the operations of schools.

At a Principals’ Association meeting (1 July 1994), a letter was written requesting that the superintendent meet with the principals with a view to:

Redesigning the Principal Consultant’s position to make it more consistent with the
needs of the principals ... and to remove the role of Aboriginal people in being able to advise the school or community on how to conduct its business.

The principals of two schools in the Lands stated that they would refuse to cooperate if I visited them. They commented that there was no need for me to work in their schools because everything was going satisfactorily according to their perceptions and I would only make more work for them if I visited.

An example of the lack of regard by most principals for the Principal Consultant’s job is shown in the following incident. It was not long after I took up the position that I was called to a Land’s school (20 June 1994) to help resolve a major problem that had occurred between the school and community. Journal entries (20-30 June 1994, pp. 247-251) describe the situation:

Ron* [school principal] phoned me this morning and told me that, while he was at Yulara for the long weekend, his house, the school and the teacher’s house, had been trashed by petrol sniffers. The damage was severe even to the point where ceilings had been pulled down in some rooms in the teacher’s house. Personal possessions had been destroyed and the school was not safe to open to students. Most of the windows had been broken.

Ron* informed me that he had phoned the police and the culprits had been identified. He was surprised at the names of some of the perpetrators of the crime because they were not normally associated with substance abuse (journal entry, 20 June 1994, p. 247).

Rose* [a Walypyla employee in the community] phoned me tonight and stated that she knew that Ron* had spoken to me. She wanted to talk to me because I was someone who was meant to resolve problems (she had read the posters about the new decision-making role in the Lands). Rose* went through a review of the last two years of schooling at the community and informed me that the school and community had drifted apart because of the actions of the principal. She told me that very few children attended school and that she no longer had confidence in the school.

More seriously, Rose* mentioned that the children had told her that they were scared of Ron* and that he dealt with them in a way that they found humiliating. Parents had no place in the school and he became extremely angry when faced with criticism.

I asked Rose* what this history had to do with the damage to the houses and the school and she said that the whole incident was not a frenzied attack by petrol sniffers, but was a deliberate act of pay-back by students at the school who had been hurt and humiliated by Ron*.

I concluded our conversation by stating that I would visit the community at once and went to Bernard’s house to request that he accompany me, at least to speak to the boys who had broken into the houses and the school (journal entry, 21 June 1994, p. 248).
We went to the community today (22 June 1994) and had a meeting with the parents, including the AEW, in a common place. The parents confirmed everything that I wrote in yesterday’s journal. The parents stated that the children were scared of Ron* and wanted him to be moved out.

Bernard confirmed the pay-back theory from the boys who broke in, and stated that the school stood outside of the normal functioning of the community. I used the community office to phone the superintendent and the senior school psychologist and spoke to them off the record. They filled me in on incidents from 1993 that had bearing on what had recently happened and I concluded that some action had to occur to work with Ron* on his anger or he would have to leave the community (journal entry, 22 June 1994, p. 248).

I spoke to Ron* this morning (23 June 1994) and he got very angry. I tried to explain that the problem was real and could not be resolved by anger. I told him that the community would not send their children to school while the problem existed. He answered that I should not be the consultant because I listened too much to Aborigines and that I was never to return to “his school”. He then hung up (journal entry, 23 June 1994, p. 249).

While the situation at this Lands’ school was used by some principals as an example of the Principal Consultant interfering in the smooth running of schools, the Reference Group used it to press their claim that a Yarnangu-controlled Lands’ decision-making group was necessary. The principals emphasised their concern at my role being used as an avenue for Aboriginal people to express their opinions in regard to the functioning of the schools. They also rejected the monitoring function of the consultant and suggested that I was a ‘stooge’ for senior officers in Kalgoorlie and Perth. The Reference Group saw the requirement that I liaise with the Kalgoorlie District Education office regarding the situation in the community as unacceptable because it prevented definitive decisions from being made at the local level to resolve problems quickly. Members began to refer to the need for the Lands to have its own superintendent (see Figure 5.4, section 5.4.2).

The conclusion I drew from the course of events was that the principals feared my role because it heralded the arrival of a form of accountability to the Lands. They were also concerned at the possible increase in the role of the Yarnangu in the schools and their consequent loss of power. The threat to their position was confirmed to some extent by teachers in the minutes of the teachers’ network meeting held on 23 July 1994.
The teachers responded enthusiastically to the announcement of the Principal Consultant's position and that Jim Heslop has received the appointment. The teachers believe that the principals need to be monitored to prevent them from running schools without consulting the teachers. For too long principals have made decisions, and if the teachers object to those decisions, they have had their permanency threatened in subtle ways, or their lives made difficult in other forms.

In summary, the creation of the Principal Consultant's position was met with fear and concern by principals particularly in the light of increased monitoring and Aboriginal involvement. Teachers, on the other hand, saw the position as a way of balancing the power differential that existed between teachers and principals. They saw that it could lend support to their extremely vulnerable positions as temporary teachers.

5.2.2 Reaction from the Yarnangu

The Ngaanyatjarra Council expressed its support for the position of Principal Consultant on behalf of the Yarnangu. In a letter written by the chairman, Jackie McLean (28 June 1994), the Council began by stating that it viewed with considerable concern the impact of the Australasian Post article (25 June 1994) and added that, “the deterioration of the relationship between the Education Department and the Council is of grave concern to the Council.” The letter further criticised the “manner in which the unnegotiated closure of the Tjirrkarli School was handled” and concluded that “the erratic behaviour of the Kalgoorlie District [Education] office is of serious concern to the Council”.

The Council then stated its support for the involvement of locally-based Yarnangu in directing the future of schooling in the area. It further recommended that the Education Department:

Implement a regional strategy for the delivery of relevant and appropriate education services to the Ngaanyatjarra communities. This strategy will only succeed by including a regional structure, the membership of which includes members of the Ngaanyatjarra Council.

The letter was sent to the Director General of Education and copies were forwarded to every Lands' school with a cover note that informed Walypala principals and teachers that the trend towards localising schooling services was inevitable and that school staff would need to accept
the trend as an appropriate direction.

The statement by the Ngaanyatjarra Council and the creation of the Principal Consultant's position was used by Bernard Newberry to justify a review of his ALO job description. In meetings held with me during October 1994, the Reference Group concluded that Bernard should become an officer holding equal status with the Principal Consultant. He would have an important role in a future Ngaanyatjarra Lands' School Board. We recommended that his former role of providing professional development to AEWs and in liaising between schools and communities be allocated to another person. An application was subsequently made to the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) (7 November 1994) to fund an ALO traineeship for twelve months in order to help facilitate the change in roles. Bernard's perception of his responsibilities during the process of developing the new decision-making authority is summed up in the following transcript from an audio-taped interview (14 October 1994):

I don't want to go back to the old job. We have moved on from that point and now we need to carry out business to introduce local control over our affairs. The others [members of the Reference Group] can help, but we [Principal Consultant and the ALO] are paid by the Department and should work much harder than the rest of the people. If the development of this job doesn't come through I will resign and do something else.

Bernard did not resign because the Kalgoorlie superintendent of education approved the adjustment to his job description (25 October 1994) and funds from the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) were released to employ a Yarnangu person to take over his AEW training and school-community liaison function (to commence in February 1995).

In conclusion, the initial job description of the Principal Consultant was narrow in that it did not formally include a requirement that the Yarnangu should be encouraged to become part of the decision-making processes within the Lands. The position, however, was quickly used by the Yarnangu to commence planning for the time when they could assume control of the provision of schooling services. The position gave the Yarnangu optimism that they would soon be able to realise their aspirations to become formal participants in running schools within the Lands.
5.3 The effect of opposition to change from within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands on members of the Reference Group

5.3.1 Introduction

The effect of this investigation impacted heavily upon members of the Reference Group. The pressure was manifested in the stress that individuals experienced particularly in times of conflict. In section 4.6.4, I noted that great stress and anxiety developed as a result of conflict between the non-school *Walypala* and members of the Reference Group. The following incidents, all of which occurred close in time to each other, added to the pressure:

1. The violence at a Land’s school (April 1994) between the *Walypala* teachers and the *Yarnangu* and the resulting tension as the Reference Group attempted to resolve the problem and reopen the school.

2. The closure of the school at Tjirrkarli (April 1994) and the resulting philosophical argument that occurred between *Walypala* groups that possibly extended the time that the school was closed.

3. The unauthorised publishing of an article on the Lands in the *Australasian Post* (25 June 1994) and the feelings of betrayal suffered by many *Yarnangu* and *Walypala* in the Lands.

4. The vandalism to the teachers’ houses and the school in W— (June 1994) that appeared to be the result of a pay-back by students against the principal.

5. The suspicion, particularly on the part of principals, in response to the creation of the Principal Consultant’s position (June and July 1994).

6. The general feeling that schooling in the Lands was under close monitoring by
senior officers in the Education Department.

One response to the stress felt by members of the Reference Group was our early perception that we needed to acquire more knowledge and experience in order to be able to understand and control new initiatives for the advantage of the Yarnangu. During the life of the Reference Group the following responsibilities were embraced:

1. Negotiating with external agents interested in schooling and training in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (Ngaanyatjarra Council, Kalgoorlie District Education Office, Ngaanyatjarra Shire Council, school authorities in the Northern Territory and South Australia, TAFE in Western Australia, and state and federal politicians).

2. Liaising with school authorities and communities within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands to resolve conflict between the Yarnangu and the Walypala and overcome opposition to change.

3. Framing a three-year strategic plan (1995-1997) and documenting a philosophy that was intended to lead to the creation of a Ngaanyatjarra Lands schooling and training board under the governance of the Yarnangu in partnership with appropriate Walypala staff.

4. Facilitating the opportunity for individual communities to develop a partnership with the teachers in their schools.

The activities of the Reference Group largely centred upon political processes. These processes met with considerable opposition (sections 4.6.3-4.6.5 and 5.2) and the boundaries between sectors of the community had to be redefined on more than one occasion and a new discourse created.

Without doubt, this study changed the direction of schooling in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands between 1992 and 1994. How permanent the changes will be remains to be seen, but the Reference Group had to carry the vanguard of school development and so it is reasonable to suggest
that the changes had not been institutionalised into the culture or behaviour of the Yarnangu in the Lands by the time that the study concluded.

5.3.2 The effect of experiences of opposition to change initiatives on members of the Reference Group

The effect of the changes brought about by this investigation was felt most heavily by the researchers. The weight of the pressure that came to bear on the Reference Group was an unpleasant surprise to me. I have already described the opposition by non-school Walypala in Warakurna (section 4.6.3) and from various individuals and groups within the Lands (section 5.2.1). There were times when the Reference Group did not know what the future held and what direction to take in regard to particular issues. The impact of this uncertainty was heightened by the lack of experience of members of the research team in using power and making decisions and that there were very few groups in places outside of the Lands that had set an example to be followed. We occasionally despaired over specific incidents and we had to work through considerable personal doubts about the value of the changes that had occurred and our capacity to drive them.

From a personal perspective, I had periods when I felt that I had lost control over the inquiry and sometimes I wondered whether I was at least partly responsible for leading the Yarnangu towards an uncertain future. The other members of the Reference Group, however, regularly reminded me that I had never been the leader. All that I had done, as principal of Warakurna school, was "to step back and let the people take over jobs that they had wanted to do a long time ago" (audio-tape recording transcribed into journal entry, 19 June 1994, p. 241). Bernard asked me to appreciate that I was part of a team of equals. He frequently reminded me that I was part of a group that was being governed by cooperative processes and collaborative decision-making. His inference was very clear that, if the Yarnangu did not want the changes to occur, then the change would never have gone ahead. Despite the reassurances, however, there remained periods of considerable personal uncertainty over incidents that occurred during the study and I had many concerns that I was involved in something that was out of control.
At a regular review meeting (journal entry, 30 September 1994, p. 299), the Reference Group met in the school office and charted all of the things that we had done (see Figure 5.1). We also recorded how we felt during the events and discussed what we had learnt from the experiences both personally and as a group. I was asked not to report some items, but those that were open to review make for an informative analysis of the transformation that happened. There were times during the meeting when I was asked by members of the Reference Group to provide the standard English word for a Ngaanyatjarra concept. The use of standard English was not intended to affect the authenticity of the record, but members were concerned that they might not be able to communicate their feelings to those out of the Lands if only Aboriginal English and Ngaanyatjarra were used. During the discussion, Bernard Newberry acted as a translator when required.

At the conclusion of the meeting, we agreed that the study had changed our attitude towards Yarnangu-Walypala relations and had refined many other values and beliefs. While we accepted that the progress had been significant, we also noted that the personal toll had been high. I have noted in section 4.6.4 that the research was primarily an examination of the impact of change upon the faith, values and beliefs of individuals as much as it was an investigation of structures and processes that were involved in the change process. In other words, the emotional impact of change was significant and permanently affected the core beliefs of the members of the Reference Group. The following vignette is an example of the high personal price that members of the Reference Group paid during the inquiry (journal entry, 10 October 1994, p. 308):

During 1992 and 1993, Bernard Newberry and I worked particularly hard to promote the role of parents in the school and to encourage a sense of leadership amongst the Yarnangu in Warakurna.

In August 1993, Bernard Newberry suffered a stroke on his way back from Punmu. He had gone to that community to investigate Yarnangu control in decision-making. Bernard had been the first community-appointed researcher and had worked with me in the setting up of the Parents' Council at Warakurna and in looking for ways of establishing Yarnangu influence in schooling processes throughout the Lands. He had been working very hard and this had shown itself in him spending long periods of time away from his family. His wife visited my home regularly and, at one point, wanted to stone me for causing her husband to travel so much.

On Sunday, 23 August 1994, Bernard was driving between Kintore and Tjukurla with Glen Cooke. He felt ill and collapsed at the steering wheel. Glen drove him to Tju-
kurla and then contacted me to ask if I would look after Bernard's rifle and a very special file of notes that he had made while at Punmu (Rawa community). Following emergency attention at Tjukurla, Bernard was flown to Alice Springs for specialist treatment. He was in hospital for about three weeks and then returned to Warakurna to take up reduced duties. In speaking to him upon his return, I asked if the research had taken its toll. He answered that the reasons didn't matter and that he didn't do anything that he didn't want to. He was very depressed for some months, however, and stated that he often felt like "dropping his head and giving in to the others who only live for the here and now".

His recovery was slow, he still takes anti-depressant and other tablets, and cannot work as hard as he did before the stroke.

From any perspective, the work of the Reference Group was dedicated and, in Bernard's case, it profoundly affected his physical and emotional well-being. I suggest, however, that more subtle changes happened to the members. Members:

1. Developed a clearer vision of the value of schooling for the Yarnangu.

2. Increased their leadership within the community.

3. Gained an awareness of the problems that occur when power is distributed inequitably.

4. Became increasingly able to take initiative and resolve issues in culturally appropriate ways.

5. Recognised the need to employ Walypala who satisfy the criterion that they must support the aspirations of the Yarnangu. The experiences also reinforced the belief that some of the Walypala did not want Aboriginal people to achieve self-determination.
**Figure 5.1**
The effect of events on the Reference group and what we have learned from them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Yarnangu feelings</th>
<th>Lessons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Mr Heslop</td>
<td>Suspicion, cynicism, maybe a nice feller</td>
<td>Not all white people are hard and out to harm the Yarnangu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting up the Parents' Council</td>
<td>Reserve, hope, a move in the right direction, a positive move</td>
<td>Yarnangu can do it, some Walypala are afraid, some Walypala don't want Aborigines to control their own lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karrku (setting up a school)</td>
<td>Want to satisfy everyone, some power at last, tough choice</td>
<td>Traditional decision-making methods work in a 'Western' problem area; with authority comes responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tjirrkarli (school closure)</td>
<td>Worry, amazement at actions of some Walypala, frustration because no one really cares</td>
<td>Some Walypala don't want the Aborigines to progress; some Walypala who are meant to be working for us are really working for themselves; the Yarnangu can resolve their own problems; the Yarnangu understand their own problems better than Walypala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land's school (violence)</td>
<td>Fear, responsibility for fellow Yarnangu, concern for reputation of schooling, angry</td>
<td>Yarnangu have to take on responsibility if any partnership will work, a structure is needed to control schooling and to establish protocols for resolving disputes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-community problems</td>
<td>Shock, concern for children, frustration, anger (resort to old methods of punishment (spearing))</td>
<td>There has to be a way of removing a teacher who is not suitable (control over staffing), we need more Yarnangu teachers, Walypala must be sensitive to their behaviour (professional development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Education Department officers' involvement</td>
<td>Suspicious, tense, spying, ignorant</td>
<td>We are being watched carefully and the Yarnangu control structure has to be effective the first time (no mistakes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions on the future of the Lands</td>
<td>positive, ownership, Aboriginal control of schools and many other aspects of life and business</td>
<td>Aspects of culture may change, need for a proper Walypala-Yarnangu partnership under Yarnangu control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Aspirations by the school-community partnership for future roles in school governance and general school development

5.4.1 Background comments

I have mentioned more than once that I was surprised by the speed with which the Yarnangu community at Warakurna began to express their aspirations by entering into a decision-making partnership with the school and achieving a significant level of control over school operations. My surprise existed despite the society-wide call that had been made, over some time, that Aboriginal people should assume greater control over school affairs.

In section 4.2, I discussed the manner in which the Yarnangu community at Warakurna assumed governance over school directions through the creation of the Parents’ Council. I also examined the way in which the Yarnangu began to agitate for a greater influence over general community functions, particularly the shop and swimming pool. I highlighted the role that conflict played in Yarnangu-Walypala relations during the study and suggested that conflict was evidence of the incisive role played by the Parents’ Council in bringing about change.

As well as the noticeable impact that the shift in the balance of power from Walypala to Yarnangu hands had on the structures and operations of Warakurna school, the partnership that
was enacted through the Parents’ Council had a strong impact upon the structure of schooling in other Lands’ communities, mainly through the agency of the Reference Group. In this regard, the Reference Group played an important role in resolving crises between schools and their communities, in conducting ‘Purpose of Schooling’ meetings in all communities (see section 5.4.2), and in outlining a plan of localising control over schooling in the medium term. The Reference Group also prepared a three-year plan (1995-1997) for schooling that aimed to devolve operational functions to the Lands’ (Appendix Two).

Moreover, in working in association with the Ngaanyatjarra Council, the Parents’ Council began to look at developing a training plan for Lands’ communities. It was felt that the plan should become part of the strategic plan on schooling, but this had not occurred by the time the research was concluded. In brief, the training plan was to look at the role of schools in training the Yarnangu to take on jobs that were being performed by Walypala employees. It was to include recommendations for the involvement of other training agencies in the Lands (TAFE, Ngaanyatjarra Health service, Department of Community Development, and community employees).

5.4.2 Proposed structure of schooling in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands

The position of Principal Consultant signalled the commencement of a new structure of decision-making within the Lands and gave integrity and status to the work that had already been done by members of the Parents’ Council, particularly those in the Reference Group. The Parents’ Council encouraged many Yarnangu to start thinking about their formal, long-term future in governing the provision of schooling services in the Lands. The Ngaanyatjarra Council, for example, wrote to the Education Department (28 June 1994) requesting that the Ngaanyatjarra Lands be established as a distinct education district with its own superintendent (replacing the Principal Consultant) and advisory staff, and that a sophisticated decision-making and resource provision structure be put in place.

The development of the education district was framed as part of the three-year strategic plan for
schooling in the Lands. It was given the working title of *Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board* (see Figure 5.2). There were three main objectives to be achieved by the board. These were:

1. To place the role and authority of external agents (education or otherwise) in its proper context (in partnership with the *Yarnangu*) by developing a constitution for the board.

2. To develop a strong sense of unity and common purpose between the *Walypala* teachers and the *Yarnangu* community. This would help schools and communities to develop a partnership and would inform beginning teachers that it is part of the philosophy of working in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands that the school and community work together for the good of community development.

3. Reflect aspirations held by the *Yarnangu* in regard to the community roles that should be developed and the status to be achieved by the *Yarnangu* in the medium term future.

At a brainstorming and review meeting at Bernard Newberry’s house (Minutes of Reference Group meeting, 27 October 1994), the Reference Group concluded that the Ngaanyatjarra Lands would be an ideal ‘guinea pig’ to be used by the Education Department to examine the possibilities of placing operational control of resources in local districts. The group discussed a number of roles that the schools board should play and authorised Bernard to visit all Lands communities during the first half of 1995 to promote the involvement of the *Yarnangu* in school decision-making. He was directed to approach communities and build a list of responsibilities that a schools board might assume over time. An initial list was provided by the Reference Group:

1. The movement of buildings within the Lands.

2. The purchase and placement of facilities in communities.

3. The provision of schooling services to the new communities.
4. The selection of teaching staff, including principals.

5. Dealing with teachers who engage in inappropriate behaviour.

6. The introduction of new curricula.

7. The allocation of PCAP and ASSPA funds to individual schools.

8. The introduction of efficiencies and resources to the administration of schools, especially the use of technology.

9. Attitudes towards specific schooling issues such as bilingualism and the establishment of a Ngaanyatjarra language publishing house (with its own ISBN) under the control of a committee with a majority of Yarnangu who can act to ensure accuracy in translation as well as appropriateness of text and meaning.

10. Handling crises within communities that involve school staff.

It was concluded that Bernard would probably return from his visits with a list of functions much longer than the one we developed. The ability of the Reference Group to provide a specific description of functions that would be performed by the Lands School Board showed how deeply a number of Yarnangu had thought about their future role in the provision of schooling in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

Within the proposed education district, it was proposed by the Reference Group and the Warakurna awareness meeting (December 1993) that there be a number of paid officers who would coordinate Lands' operations through an education centre. The positions would include one district superintendent, a director of schooling, and one Aboriginal liaison officer. The superintendent and director of schooling would be of equal standing. The director of schooling would be a Yarnangu and the superintendent would be a Walypala, at least in the short term, with skills
complementary to those held by the director of schooling. Both officers would be appointed for a three to five year term.

Working as the oversight of the superintendent, director, and ALO, a Lands School Board, in association with the Ngaanyatjarra Council, would be given the task of helping to establish policy in schooling and training over the Lands. The board would consist of delegates from each community who would meet twice each term to discuss schooling issues and assist in framing the parameters that would embrace the aspirations of the Yarrawang on the role of schooling in the district.

Within the education office, a number of school development officers would be employed to deal with specific curriculum areas. ‘Purpose of Schooling’ meetings conducted at Tjukurla (Minutes of meeting, 23 May 1994, pp. 4-9), Warakurna (Minutes of meeting, 31 March 1994, pp. 1-4) and Blackstone (Minutes of meeting, 8 June 1994, pp. 10-17) indicated, for example, that English and Ngaanyatjarra literacy were important areas that merited school development officers. Although each meeting differed with respect to the context in which it was conducted, a description of the Tjukurla meeting (journal entry, 23 May 1994, pp. 289-291; minutes of meeting, 23 May 1994, pp. 4-9) will serve as a representative example:

We [the Reference Group] arrived at about 10.00am and people were already mulling around the store. We stopped the car and greeted everyone. We moved to the Women’s Centre and took up positions on the verandah.

Bernard stood up and asked the people to think about what they wanted the school to do for them and told them that they should start getting ready to become more involved in school affairs. The people started to talk between themselves and I charted the ideas and aspirations as I heard them mentioned.

The ideas included:

1. Ngaanyatjarra language (particularly reading and writing).
2. Reading and writing.
5. Children should go away to Alice Springs for secondary school. The school
should not provide facilities for post-primary students. (I was surprised at this feedback and asked Bernard to confirm the accuracy of reporting with the group).

6. Training for adults (not in the school, but in some other facility).

7. Respect for community expectations and business (create a balance between the children's involvement in activities of the Law and them being kept back in Tjukurla and sent to school).

8. Take the children on excursions out of the Lands that the parents cannot always arrange themselves.

9. Give the children some after-school activities that will help keep them away from sniffing and getting into other trouble.

10. Teach them to behave properly in front of the Walypala.

Members of the Tjukurla community showed that they had a number of clear visions about the future schooling for their children and the sort of skills they wished them to develop. As the Reference Group drove home from the meeting, we agreed that the experience at Tjukurla was an example of how the Yarnangu were ready to participate fully in decision-making that would help direct the future of schooling in the Lands. It was also noted that the people recognised that schooling and training was a key to the realisation of the goals of self-determination within communities.

A conversation I had with Hayden (audio-tape interview transcribed into journal, 27 October 1994, p. 302) reinforced the Yarnangu recognition of the position of schooling as holding an important key to their future roles within the general community. It is found in the following vignette:

A couple of days ago, the shop was broken into by the sniffers (also journal entry, 25 October 1994, p. 301) (discussed in section 4.6.3). A Walypala employee ordered that the shop be closed immediately and that the roadhouse and weather station not serve food to the Yarnangu. I was personally distressed and appalled at this act and wondered how the Yarnangu felt. I knew that there had been some shouting and a few people had been to the home of the Walypala employee exchanging angry words, but I wasn’t sure how the wider community stood in regard to this matter.

Hayden works in the clinic and, therefore, gets around to most people each day. He hears the stories and listens to the complaints. He asked me to help do some work on his car, so I brought up in general conversation the matter of the store closure. He dismissed the whole incident with the wave of a hand. He stated that the people were
quite annoyed at what had happened, but that he didn’t really care anymore:

“This mob of Walypala ... they won’t be here for long. I’ll just wait and they will soon go. I don’t get involved in the community with them anymore. I just let it pass me by. I only get involved in the [Parents’] Council because that’s where the future is. That’s where the future will be ... in the school and what it can do for the Yarnangu, you know teaching the kids good and training the older people in jobs that can take the place of the Walypala. I see the school council moving on and growing up more. I see it getting better and so I think not to worry about the problems now because I see something better soon. The school business makes me think that way.”

To maintain the hope that Hayden showed during the conversation, the proposed Lands School Board and the district education office were designed to be controlled by the Yarnangu and to employ them in senior management positions. It was also seen to embrace the individuals and departments that bring training to the Lands so that the Yarnangu could realise their ambition to take over the employment held by the Walypala and ensure that there would be “something better soon”.

Certainly there had been a trend for Walypala to dominate employment and decision-making in the Lands in recent years and this needed to be reviewed. In 1979, as a teacher living in the Lands, I estimated that there were 13 Walypala living throughout the communities, including Warburton Ranges. In 1994, there were 20 Walypala living in Warakurna alone, and approximately 170 in the Lands as a whole (a 13-fold increase in just 15 years). It might be suggested that for every new service provided to the Lands, a new Walypala came with it. It might also be hypothesised that many Yarnangu wanted to see the trend reversed by having trained Yarnangu people take over functions that were performed by the Walypala. In an audio-taped interview with Bernard Newberry (transcribed into a journal entry, 15 September 1994, p. 290), he stated that “the Yarnangu must receive the training that they need to take over Walypala jobs and do them properly in the [medium term]”. In the short term, however, “the Yarnangu must have the main say in choosing which Walypala take up jobs in the Lands”. During the period of this inquiry, the responsibility for employing the Walypala rested primarily with community advisors, with only token representation on appointment boards by the Yarnangu. In a commentary regarding the value of some Walypala employees who were working in the Lands, Bernard noted:
So what type of *Walypala* have we got working out here? In [one community], the most important *Walypala* employee is a former plantation owner from New Guinea and he treats us like second-rate people. His [subordinate officer] used to be a member of the South African army, and he was not suited to working with Aboriginal people. He’s gone now. The [most significant *Walypala* employee] at [another community] was a stock auctioneer before he came here. He had never worked alongside Aboriginal people before. He didn’t manage people either. The [significant *Walypala* employee] at [another community] was a farmer and once he was in the army. Little wonder he used to handcuff the *Yarnangu* to trees if they caused him any trouble ... being an old army bloke.

We get some rubbish *Walypala* up here to work. Worse still, when *Walypala* builders or contractors come here, they stay for just a little while and get the job done quickly. Hardly any of them stay to train any *Yarnangu*. They just do the job, take their money and run. It's time to do more of the jobs ourselves.

It may be theorised that this vignette is an example of community development being conducted according to an assimilationist or integrationist model with ultimate power resting in the hands of *Walypala* agents. In discussions with the Reference Group in November and December 1993, with specific regard to the future of employing more *Yarnangu* to take on former *Walypala* jobs in the school, it was decided that the movement had to proceed according to two streams running parallel with each other. The streams were:

1. Establishing *Yarnangu* governance over school operations and policies at least in a political and philosophical sense.

2. The provision of appropriate training for the *Yarnangu* to become teachers using a combination of on-site services and technology.

As if to implement this policy, during 1994 the Parents' Council at Warakuma became active in moving to control of a number of features at the school and encouraged other Lands' communities to do likewise. Similarly, one *Yarnangu* (Beryl Jennings) commenced teacher training by external study in February 1994 and another person from a nearby community moved to Alice Springs to undertake her training on campus. The Reference Group also agitated to get the Pundulmurra TAFE College (based in Port Hedland, Western Australia) to establish an annex in the Lands. Members desired to see the commencement of a teacher-training course through the
annex in order to give increased opportunity for Aboriginal people living in the central desert region of Australia (not just the *Yarnangu*) to become teachers. They also wanted to see other training programs established, particularly those that would enable young Aboriginal people to fulfil the developmental aspirations of Lands' communities.

In conclusion, the ability of the Reference Group to document the aspirations of the *Yarnangu* in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands highlights the credibility of that group within the district, but also shows that the people had specific ideas on the future of the Lands and used the Reference Group as the forum to express those ideas. The most important conclusion that can be reached from this section is that the *Yarnangu* viewed indigenous government of the schooling system as the catalyst for the overall development of the Lands in a manner that was consistent with *Yarnangu* desires. They had short term as well as long term strategies for achieving that end. Figure 5.2 summarises the key elements of the plan.
**Figure 5.2**
The proposed structure of schooling in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands showing the flow of decision-making.

- **Policy and directions established by the Lands Schools Board**

- **Ngaanyatjarra Lands Education Office**
  - Superintendent (Walypala, in the medium term) → Director of Schooling (Aboriginal chairperson of the school board)
  - School advisory officers → Aboriginal Liaison Officer (e.g. linguists, language advisor)

- **School principals**
  - Yarnangu & Walypala teachers → Aboriginal Education Worker(s)
CHAPTER SIX

DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES
CHAPTER SIX

DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

6.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the principles and theories that emerged during the investigation at Warakurna and then to link them with the academic literature that was discussed in Chapter Two. A framework that connected the elements of theory emerged inductively from the analysis of events that occurred at Warakurna. The framework theorised about the various facets of the Yarnangu/Walypala partnership that developed during the investigation. These facets included the nature of the relationship, the likely outcomes of such a relationship, the conditions needed for its development, and the consequences of it not developing.

The way in which theory was constructed from the investigation is shown in two tables in Appendix One. Table 1.1 describes the levels of analysis through which data were examined. It takes the categories into which data were grouped during the investigation (as shown in Table 3.6) and subjects them to increasingly sophisticated analysis in order to facilitate the emergence of underlying concepts. Table 1.2 integrates the concepts to create substantive theory, that is, theory which is grounded in specific data but from which tentative general statements can be made.

Table 6.1
The beginnings of a unified theory on the growth of partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups in the development of Aboriginal schools and communities

In order to achieve a genuine redistribution of power to achieve a genuine partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala in the development of the Warakurna community:

A. This must be the nature of that relationship:
   The Yarnangu have authority in running their affairs (Theory A)
The Yarnangu have cultural and operational autonomy (Theory C)
The Yarnangu are able to achieve their aspirations (Theory D)

B. Within this relationship, the Yarnangu probably need to:

1. Act from institutionally respected positions within existing organisations and structures where the historic disadvantage experienced by the Yarnangu is most apparent and the people most vulnerable (Theory E).

2. Create structures that help the Yarnangu to achieve their aspirations if existing ones are found to be inadequate or non-existent (Theories A, B, C, & H).

3. Implement persistent political action as a whole community to bring about change and then to institutionalise it so it is less susceptible to Walypala resistance (Theory I).

4. Reflect the following features of interaction between individuals and groups - delegated authority, collaborative decision-making, openness, mutual respect, and dialogue (Theory D).

5. Integrate appropriate Western decision-making methods and processes of interaction with traditional protocols (Theories B & H).

6. Involve the Walypala in the change process at least during the awareness stage (Theory D).

C. The likely result of such a relationship:

1. The decisions that are made regarding the future of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands will be seen by both parties as effective and relevant (Theory A).

2. The Walypala will display emotional responses and have varying degrees of preparedness to enter into decision-making partnerships with the Yarnangu (Theory E).

3. The Yarnangu are likely to be willing to be involved in a partnership with Walypala who conduct themselves in ways that are acceptable to the Yarnangu (Theory D & H).

4. The Yarnangu are likely to facilitate change in other parts of the region so that there is a whole group movement towards the achievement of an objective (Theory J).

D. Without such a relationship:
1. A relationship will continue which most *Walypala* feel is rational and equitable but most *Yarnangu* feel is discriminatory, oppressive and irrelevant (Theory G).

D. In order to achieve this relationship, these changes are prerequisite:

1. Because of the lack of precedence in Aboriginal autonomy in community development, all participants must take steps of faith in the face of uncertainty and possible opposition (Theory K).

2. There must be a fundamental reorientation in ideologies, the distribution of power, and the structures and institutions that define the philosophy of the community (Theory B & E).

3. All levels of *Walypala* authority within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands as well as outside the region must accept the right of the *Yarnangu* to run their affairs (Theory C).

6.1 Discussion of the theoretical framework that emerged from the investigation

This section reviews the theories that emerged during the investigation (Table 6.1) in the light of what relevant academic literature has to contribute. That is, this section seeks to confirm or critique the theories in the light of the findings of other research.

6.1.1 The nature of the relationship between the *Yarnangu* and the *Walypala* according to an autonomous model

The investigation suggested three broad features of a genuine partnership between the *Yarnangu* and the *Walypala*:

1. The *Yarnangu* must have the authority to run their affairs.

2. The *Yarnangu* must have cultural and operational autonomy.

3. The *Yarnangu* must feel as though they are able to achieve their aspirations.
The first feature of a Yarnangu-Walypala relationship that is based on the autonomous model is that the Yarnangu must have authority in running their affairs. At the beginning of the investigation, the topic of study was the development of Yarnangu control over the school at Warakurna. Shortly afterwards, when the Yarnangu had taken control of the inquiry, the research widened to include the increasing authority of the Yarnangu in community affairs. Finally, the Yarnangu widened the scope still further to include the development of Yarnangu authority in schooling throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. The rapid expansion of the investigation is one indicator that the Yarnangu were keen to be involved in the development of their community, but from a position of authority. Many other aspects of the investigation emphasised the Yarnangu rejection of systems and processes that gave them minimal involvement in decision-making but preserved the dominance of the Walypala. The fundamental purpose in all of the changes, conflicts, meetings and plans that the inquiry observed, was the desire by the Yarnangu to have control over the community and the region.

Examples of initiatives that were implemented by the Yarnangu in order for them to gain authority over their affairs include:

1. The development of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board to establish regional control over the provision of schooling to the Yarnangu students.

2. The operation of the Warakurna School Parent’s Council to control the direction and growth of the Warakurna School.

3. The function of the Reference Group that was initially formed to help to conduct this research, but quickly became involved in tasks such as advocacy, negotiating, resolving conflict, decision-making, and information collecting throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

4. Challenging the role of long-standing authoritative structures like the Ngaanyatjarra Council and the regional branch of ATSIC.
The desire of the Yarnangu to have control over their affairs is reflected by authors like Altman (1985, p. 6), Eckermann (1981, p. 21), Christie (1988b, p. 3), Willmett (1988, pp. 40-41), the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990, p. 24), Moore (1993, p. 57), and the Education Department of Western Australia (1993, p. 4). They state that Aboriginal authority in schooling and other community affairs is required for the following reasons:

1. To increase the relevance of formal community operations to the daily life of community members.

2. To ensure that there is no cultural or language bias in the operation of community institutions.

3. To increase the self-esteem of the Aboriginal population by them having 'ownership' of their community (self management).

4. To reduce the gulf that exists between Aboriginal aspirations and the extent to which they are being achieved.

5. To present new ways of dealing with economic and social problems such as unemployment, indebtedness, poor health, and the lack of formal schooling.

6. To align the provision of schooling services with the achievement of community aspirations.

This investigation found that the Yarnangu desired to have authority over their affairs for reasons similar to those suggested above. It showed that the long-standing Walyala domination of community development had not prevented the Yarnangu from discussing issues and forming opinions about how to deal with their problems. It also challenged the myths, such as those as documented by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990, p. 2), that
Aboriginal people have neither the interest nor the ability to control their communities. Finally, the ease with which decision-making organisations were set up in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands indicates that Walypala authority was vulnerable and lacking in credibility because of its inability to confront some major issues and point to a future for the region with any confidence. This point is in line with statements made by the Commonwealth Schools Commission (1985), Cowlishaw (1992, pp. 20-31), and Smith (1992) that recommend the involvement of Aboriginal people in making the decisions that will challenge chronic problems caused by inequality, disadvantage, lack of access, and oppression.

The second feature of the theory concerning the nature of the Yarnangu-Walypala relationship in the community is that the Yarnangu must have cultural and operational autonomy. That is, Yarnangu authority must be as congruent as possible with their cultural heritage and the processes that they use to exercise their control over community affairs should be as consistent with the expectations of traditional decision-makers as possible. This investigation showed that the Yarnangu were committed to exposing their children to non-Aboriginal knowledge and practices that would enable them to achieve greater control over their community, but they wanted to see it occur within the context of maintaining traditional cultural beliefs and practices. They wanted young people to be skilled in Western business management techniques and to be able to conduct themselves in particular Walypala ways, but to primarily uphold the traditions and culture of the local group.

The desire by the Yarnangu to achieve cultural autonomy revealed itself in different ways. Some of the Yarnangu, for example, did not appear to be able to fulfil the traditional family responsibility of providing their children with education in cultural beliefs and practices. Other features of community life, mostly recent developments in Warakurna, appeared to limit the opportunities for appropriate adults to offer cultural education to young people. These imported features included the increasing importance of television and videos, the availability of rapid and reasonably comfortable transport, the ability of the community to easily satisfy the physical needs of the people, and a social life that emphasised the acceptance of Western-derived values and technology. Despite apparently not being able to carry out traditional roles in the cultural education of their children,
however, the adults from these families still recognised the importance of traditional cultural values and practices, albeit expressed in somewhat vague terms, and they wanted to see an appropriate cultural balance achieved in the school.

At the same time, there were families who held specific concerns about the school's role in undermining the cultural heritage of the community. Appropriate adults from these families spent a lot of time after school hours teaching young people the knowledge, skills and beliefs that they saw as being important for the cultural-spiritual survival of the Yarnangu. To them, their desire to achieve cultural autonomy in the school was seen in specific terms, such as the preservation of vernacular, the observance of social protocols, and respect for local geographic areas.

Concerns about the portrayal of particular cultural values by schools and the general preservation of traditional Aboriginal values and practices have been documented by authors like Poulson (1986), Wunungmurra (1988), Yunupingu (1988), Harris (1990), Budby (1994) and von Sturmer (1994). They have been discussed in regard to issues like two-way schooling, domain separation, school decision-making, and Aboriginal teacher training. Most of the authors, however, are either non-Aboriginal people or are Aboriginal writers who have experienced a long period of Western education. The strength of the theory from this investigation, however, is that it has come from Aboriginal adults who, for the most part, are likely to have received very little Western schooling, have never held significant positions of employment in the Western community, and have rarely been asked to express their opinions before. The strong desire by these Yarnangu to achieve cultural autonomy, therefore, adds weight to similar arguments by authors from other backgrounds. It also reveals a depth of concern in at least some remote communities that the philosophy of schooling that dominated the largely non-Aboriginal teaching service during the period of the investigation was not consistent with the desires of the Aboriginal community.

During the investigation, the emergence of operational autonomy as a feature of the Yarnangu relationship with the Walypala was seen in the increasing use of the following traditional decision-making processes:
1. Informal methods of communicating and making everyone aware of the decisions that have to be made (holistic decision-making).

2. Examining present circumstances through the filter of past experiences and long-standing beliefs and expectations.

3. Recognising the role of the 'old men' as the key decision-makers in the community.

4. Communicating by largely verbal or pictorial means.

5. Observing a flexible time frame for decision-making.

6. Letting culturally determined relationships between individuals determine the way in which decision-making should occur.

The importance of Aboriginal people having operational control over the development of their communities is supported by McConnachie (1985), McClay (1988), McTaggart (1988), Poulson (1988), Reaburn (1989), Harris (1990), Willmett (1991), Smith (1992), Gamage (1993) and Wolfe (1994, p. 22). They see the placing of decision-making power about day-to-day matters in the hands of Aboriginal people as the only way for the people to achieve their goals in culturally acceptable ways.

The third aspect of the nature of the relationship that must exist between the Yarnangu and the Walypala is that the Yarnangu must feel as though they are able to achieve their aspirations. As the investigation at Warakurna proceeded, the Yarnangu clarified their goals and then either created organisations or attempted to work through existing structures in order to achieve the goals. The Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board, the Parent's Council and the Reference Group are examples of new organisations that were established to achieve Yarnangu aspirations, while the joint role of the Principal Consultant and the AEW, in fulfilling Education Department requirements, show that
the Yarnangu were able to find success in existing structures. The role of the Yarnangu in working through existing structures or in creating new ones will be further discussed in section 6.1.2.

In regard to the school's role in helping to meet the desire of the community to have operational control, the Yarnangu felt that there was a clear role for the school to train local people to take on the jobs that were filled by the Walypala. This finding is in line with statements from academic literature that recognises the important role of the school in enabling Aboriginal people to achieve the specific objectives of their communities, including the provision of teachers from within the local population. That is, there is a strong link between the academic success of Aboriginal students at school and the extent to which community development can proceed in ways that are deemed to be appropriate by Aboriginal decision-makers (Lanhupuy, 1987; Theis, 1987; McClay, 1988, pp. 275-276; Poulson, 1988; Wunungmurra, 1988; Yunupingu, 1988; the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, 1989; Eversley, 1990, p. 39; Harris, 1990; Singh, 1990; Yunupingu and Christie, 1990; Bunbury, Hastings, Henry and McTaggart, 1991; Smith, 1992; Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1994, pp. 47-48; the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 1994, pp. 47-48).

At the conclusion of the investigation, there was a sense of optimism within the Yarnangu community that operational control was emerging and would enable group goals to be realised and the proper handling of any difficulties that might arise along the way. In particular, the role of the Parent's Council, the leadership shown by the Reference Group, the objectives of the proposed Ngaanyatjarra Lands' School Board, and the skills of particular individuals (mainly members of the Reference Group) provide reason for this belief. The success of these Yarnangu-controlled structures also made the Yarnangu realise that their cultural beliefs and practices could facilitate community development. In other words, community development was not a concept confined to a Western paradigm, but could also be found within Yarnangu contexts.

6.1.2 The actions of the Yarnangu community in the light of a genuine partnership with the Walypala
Within a Yarnangu-Walypala relationship that is based on an autonomous model, the following actions of the Yarnangu were found to be important:

1. They must be able to act from institutionally respected positions within existing organisations that have sustained their vulnerability over a long period of time.

2. They may need to create systems and structures that will help to achieve Yarnangu aspirations if existing ones are found to be inadequate.

3. The whole group must engage in persistent political action to bring about change and then institutionalise it in the face of possible opposition from the Walypala.

4. They must interact with Walypala individuals according to the behaviours of delegated authority, collaborative decision-making, openness, mutual respect, and dialogue.

5. Western decision-making methods and processes of interaction must be integrated with traditional protocols.

6. Attempts should be made to involve the Walypala in the change process at least during the awareness phase.

During the investigation, a number of Yarnangu men found that they could achieve some of the objectives of the community by working through existing structures and organisations. These men sought to negotiate roles for Yarnangu representatives in various organisations that would help them to achieve specific community objectives. An example of this is seen in that the position of Principal Consultant (Ngaanyatjarra Lands) with the Education Department which was initially allocated to a Walypala individual with no role for the Yarnangu. Following a brief but intense period of negotiation, however, the AEW for the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, Bernard Newberry, was appointed to complement the role of the consultant. This enabled local decision-making to increase
because the consultant and the AEW regularly visited the communities and implemented awareness-raising strategies to promote the value of schooling in the region.

A further example is found in the challenge to the Ngaanyatjarra Council during 1994 to better represent the needs of the communities by employing Yarnangu individuals in positions of authority. There was a sense in some communities within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands that the Council had become remote from the Yarnangu because only Walypala officers held the key operational positions. As a result, some of the Yarnangu had become frustrated at the lack of consultation on important issues and this led, for example, to the establishment of a Yarnangu-controlled mining company in 1994.

Another example is seen in the decision by the Yarnangu at Warakurna to restructure the decision-making process in the community and so limit the power of the Walypala employees to make decisions without consulting the Yarnangu community. This decision caused a great deal of conflict within the community as a result of resistance from the Walypala. The negative response to change by the non-school Walypala will be further discussed in section 6.1.3.

In summary, the investigation recorded the increasing desire by the Yarnangu that existing structures should better represent the communities by employing local people in authoritative positions. This observation is endorsed by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990, pp. 6 & 8-11). It is described by Cowlishaw (1988), Lea and Wolfe (1993) and Wolfe (1994) as a political challenge by Aboriginal people to the legitimacy of the long-standing relationship that exists with the non-Aboriginal community. Political activity is aimed at redistributing power between the groups, ensuring that the work and philosophy of various organisations is consistent with the aspirations of the Aboriginal people, and providing them with access to Western-dominated institutions and systems that have historically exploited Aboriginal people by not meeting their needs (Saha and Keeves, 1990, p. 280; Carspecken, 1991, p. 9-10; Yunupingu, 1993, p. 4).
The second feature of a partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala is that if the existing institutions are inadequate in promoting the aspirations of the Yarnangu, then new ones have to be created. The main symbol of Yarnangu authority that emerged at Warakurna during the investigation was the Parents’ Council. The Council’s genesis was from a number of informal parent-teacher meetings that were held during 1992. These meetings initially appeared to be unsuccessful because there was little communication between teachers and parents and there were no commitments to further action. The impact of the long-standing dominance of the non-Aboriginal community over Aboriginal people was particularly evident.

As a result of the persistent but cautious approach by the Yarnangu members of the Reference Group as well as the commitment shown by the Walypala teachers to the establishment of a genuine school-community partnership, the Parents’ Council flourished during 1993 and 1994. The emergence of this formal school-community decision-making partnership into a strong and effective organisation (written personal correspondence from Bob Somerville, Kalgoorlie District superintendent, 22 October 1994) supports the theory that Aboriginal control over the provision of schooling to Aboriginal students can be successful by any measure if it is able to employ processes that are consistent with traditional expectations (Kemmis, 1988; Jordan, 1989; Reaburn, 1989; Brown, 1990; Harris, 1990; Willmett, 1991; Randell, 1993; Lea and Wolfe, 1993; Yunupingu, 1993; Wolfe, 1994).

Another organisation that was created by the Yarnangu because their needs were not being met by existing structures was the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board. Although not commenced before the investigation had concluded, the Board was designed because many Yarnangu felt that the problems in the provision of schooling in the Lands were at least partly caused by Western-derived structures not being able to represent their points of view. This situation became worse when the Education Department gave formal approval to all of the schools in the Lands not to form school-based decision-making groups despite them being a requirement of every other government controlled school in Western Australia (Western Australian Ministry of Education, 1993, p.69). Although the Yarnangu occasionally considered withdrawing their children from the schools and
setting up their own schooling system, they generally felt that working through the Education Department was the best option. Nevertheless, they did not see the existing Education Department decision-making structure as able to promote the development of schooling in the region. Following a series of awareness-raising meetings, the school board was formed to act as an umbrella organisation to guide the development of schooling in the area. Appendix Two describes the structure of the board.

Academic sources record the move by some Aboriginal communities to set up schooling systems that are better able to meet the needs of their communities than existing organisations. As with the Yarnangu in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, these communities have found that existing systems of schooling suffer two main weaknesses (Crawford, 1989; Singh, 1990; Nirrpuranydji, 1991; Woods, 1991; Aboriginal Independent Schools, 1992; Smith, 1992):

1. They limit the extent to which Aboriginal people can reach positions of decision-making authority in schools. This lack of representation by Aboriginal people at senior levels in schools means that the operations of the school are not likely to be consistent with the objectives of the Aboriginal community.

2. Schools frequently attempt to socialise students into an identity that is quite different from traditional expectations. The curriculum has generally been removed from the experience of the students and has not been able to meet the aspirations of the families. As a result, students have been alienated from the schooling process and have experienced academic failure and the consequent exclusion from positions of authority in Western institutions.

This investigation provides a detailed example of how the Warakuma community moved through a process from having no power in the school to being in control of the institution. It is an almost unique example of community empowerment in a school while remaining within the government system. It describes the sort of issues that other communities may have to deal with if they decide to move in a similar direction. It also describes the structures and processes that helped the Yar-
*nangu* to deal with those issues. As a map of how a community can become genuinely involved in its school, this investigation adds to the body of research on Aboriginal community development. The model that evolved in Warakurna was implemented by other communities in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands towards the end of the investigation and had some early success. As a result, the model may have application in other places.

The third action that characterises the relationship between the *Yarnangu* and the *Walypala* is that the whole group has to be involved in bringing about change and then must engage in persistent political activity to institutionalise that change. This investigation found that the *Yarnangu* preferred to see change as an inclusive process where all communities in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands could be involved. A number of respondents saw a regional approach as an appropriate cultural response to the transformation in power relations that occurred in Warakurna. Therefore, while the initial focus of the investigation was upon change in Warakurna only, the inquiry soon spread to the effect of similar change in other communities as people from Warakurna shared the model of school-community development in other places and encouraged other *Yarnangu* to embark upon a similar program of change. There were also a number of Lands-wide initiatives, such as the establishment of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board (from 1995) and a review of the functions of the Ngaanyatjarra Council.

The holistic approach to introducing change is consistent with the view expressed by Wolfe (1994, p. 22) that decision-making must occur in ways that are consistent with the culture of the local community. The issue of cultural relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups as a factor in the creation of economic, political and social dominance is discussed in general terms by authors like Aplet and Lingard (1992, p. 68), Kringas and Stewart (1992, pp. 20-35) and Moore (1993, p. 57). They state that if a change initiative does not involve the cultural transformation of the community through political processes, then it will not have a significant impact upon the ideology of particular institutions and, therefore, all forms of inequality will remain. In other words, if issues like discrimination and racism are not confronted in a political way as change is implemented, then there will be no shift in the structures that define how an organisation will function and
the change initiative will only be as successful as the dominant class wishes it to be.

This investigation makes a number of findings on how to use political processes to successfully bring about change. One finding is that leadership in at least some Aboriginal communities should be seen as a whole group process and not in non-Aboriginal terms where there are frequently significant individuals who lead the group. As Zoltin (1993, p. 5) and Fullan (1993, pp. 12-17) state, however, there is also a need for a critical group of core leaders with clear goals and principles to design policy and share their vision with others. These leaders must have respect within the particular community in order to have their views taken seriously. The Reference Group formed the critical group of individuals with a high social standing in the Warakurna community and were able to share their plans with the rest of the community and encourage a movement towards change. In line with comments made by Reaburn (1989) and Willmett (1991, p. 40), however, the Reference Group did not attempt to develop plans outside of the endorsement given by the traditional decision-makers and so, the movement by the whole community to implement particular changes in Warakurna was more because these decision-makers gave their approval than because the Reference Group had a particular point of view that they wished to promote.

Once desirable changes had started to occur in Warakurna, the Yarnangu found that they had to continually engage in political activity in order to ensure that their achievements became part of the normal functioning of the community. The investigation described, for example, how the Yarnangu had to struggle to keep control of the shop, swimming pool and the women's centre. It highlighted how the former Walypala employees reacted strongly against the change in authority and frequently implemented a variety of strategies to win back control of the enterprises. The Walypala employees believed that only they could manage the affairs of the community, especially financial, and saw the challenge to their long-standing control of community enterprises as a form of sabotage.

The issue of Walypala response to change will be further discussed in section 6.1.3, but their reactions are reflected in comments by authors like Stone (1974), McConnochie (1982), Cow-
lishaw (1988), Pusey (1991) and Muecke (1992), Jones (1992) and Morris (1992). These authors claim that the history of Aboriginal oppression has led to the creation of a number of myths and stereotypes about the ability of Aboriginal people to effectively participate in mainstream society. Moreover, these stereotypes still define the logic, rationality and behaviour of many non-Aboriginal people. Therefore, when Aboriginal people express the desire to control their affairs, many non-Aboriginal people respond with scepticism and concern because they believe that Aboriginal people cannot make the decisions that will improve their welfare. As a result, Aboriginal people find that they must use political processes to confront issues of social mythology about themselves before being able to successfully bring about change.

Hall (1981), Fullan (1991), Robertson (1992), Gamage (1993) and Merelman (1993) agree with the findings in the investigation that political action by an historically oppressed group, such as the Yarnangu, to bring about change, should mature into a form of vigilance to resist attempts by the previously dominant group, like the Walypala, to regain lost power in the belief that only they can act to further the interests of the weaker group. Similarly, Graham (1986, p. 4), Brown (1990, p. 1), Harris (1990, pp. 45-49), Fullan (1993), Lea and Wolfe (1993) and Zoltin (1993) state that important change can be sustained by Aboriginal people who work in an ongoing political context.

The fourth action described in the investigation as a way of sustaining a genuine partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala is through individuals practising delegated authority, collaborative decision-making, openness, mutual respect, and dialogue. The investigation recorded a number of occasions when these features characterised the decision-making process. The partnership that the Yarnangu at Warakurna wanted to have with Walypala teachers, for example, was one where the teachers were prepared to work under the umbrella of local community control and carry out their responsibilities using the authority that had been delegated to them by the community. That is, the community invited the Walypala teachers to offer their knowledge and skills, but from the standpoint of contributing expertise rather than exhibiting power over the Yarnangu.

This feature is in line with the concept that is suggested in academic literature that "any non-
Aboriginal staff [should] think of themselves as servants of the local community, holding delegated authority, rather than being a direct source of leadership ...” (Harris, 1990, p. 18). It also agrees with the already mentioned principle that any fundamental redistribution of power between groups must involve a reorientation in the ideology of the participants and the structure of relationships that exists between individuals and institutions (Owens, 1981; Eversley, 1990; Saha and Keeves, 1990; Kringas and Stewart, 1992; Moore, 1993; Lea and Wolfe, 1993).

The reorientation of power does not require one group to be empowered at the expense of another. The concepts of delegated authority, collaborative decision-making, openness, mutual respect, and dialogue allow for all groups to achieve their objectives. Koh (1995), McIntyre (1995) and Drew (1995) argue that the notion of power as one group getting their own way and the powerless suffering the consequences is not the only way to define power. They believe that power should be used to influence society for good by individuals who are working towards a common vision.

Aspects of this investigation portrayed power as an instrument of class domination and suppression. This was shown in conflict and social disharmony as may be seen in the way in which the Yarnangu had to wrest power from the non-school Walypala because the Walypala perceived change as a threat to their status and therefore had to be strongly resisted. The investigation also found examples of power being used as a form of mutual empowerment where the Yarnangu and the Walypala transformed existing values and worked together towards increasingly specific goals. The way in which a genuine partnership was established in the school to the mutual benefit of the teachers and the community is an example of the operation of this model. The investigation found that this view of power was the most desirable one to implement if the objectives of community development were to be achieved and if a genuine Yarnangu-Walypala partnership was to flourish. All participants felt that they had been personally enriched because the community had become a better place in which to live.

The fifth feature of Yarnangu behaviour within a genuine Yarnangu-Walypala relationship is that the Yarnangu integrate appropriate Western decision-making methods and processes of interaction.
with traditional protocols. The key behind this feature from the investigation is that those involved in change could only proceed with confidence if they had the support of the traditional decision-makers, the ‘old men’. At the same time, however, many of the Yarnangu realised that they did not have the expertise to achieve their goals and needed help from Walypala employees. The conversation recorded in section 4.6.3 between Lionel* and Derrick* concerning the roles of the Walypala and the Yarnangu in developing the Ngaanyatjarra Lands is an example of the type of debate that occurred as attempts were made to strike a balance between increasing the authority of the Yarnangu in the region while also employing various external agents to help to achieve the goals of the communities. The Yarnangu had clear objectives in regard to community development, they knew that they needed help from the Walypala to achieve them, but they also wanted to employ traditional practices as part of the development process.

This description is similar to those provided by Valance and Valance (1988), Yunupingu (1988), Harris (1990), National Board of Employment, Education and Training (1992), Lea and Wolfe (1993), Lee, 1993, p. 30. These authors conclude that a key to development in Aboriginal communities is the role played by a group of Aboriginal people who can work in a bicultural context. These people can successfully conduct themselves within Western structures and organisations but maintain their cultural integrity. As mentioned above, a number of Yarnangu men were able to successfully integrate a variety of Western and traditional processes and so enable them to gain greater control over their affairs. They functioned in a bicultural way in order to encourage a closer symmetry and responsiveness between the views of the community and Western-derived institutions.

The sixth feature of Yarnangu behaviour that characterises an effective Yarnangu-Walypala relationship is that the Yarnangu should attempt to involve the Walypala in the change process, especially at the awareness stage. During the investigation, the Yarnangu employed traditional planning processes to help complement non-Aboriginal methods and ensure that there was adequate communication within the Yarnangu community about the strategies that were required to bring about change and so achieve their goals. They did this by conducting a series of community awareness-raising workshops, adapting the processes that were suggested by Alan Randell (1990).
Wolfe (1994, p. 9) supports the use of awareness workshops as part of Aboriginal community development and believes that the awareness stage is an essential prerequisite to the implementation of fundamental change. The awareness stage became part of the cycle of Yarnangu community development at Warakurna. It coupled reflection and evaluation and occurred in different forms throughout the period of research. It was a finding of this investigation, however, that if the workshops had involved the non-school Walypala and not just the Walypala teachers, then the strong negative emotional reaction shown by these people may have been minimised because they would have felt as though they were part of the change process and not separate from it. Wolfe (1994, p. 14) agrees that there is a need to transfer awareness and planning to implementation and that this must involve the creation of a partnership between the community and external [mainly non-Aboriginal] agents based on the principle of mutual learning (1994, p. 25).

6.1.3 The likely result of a genuine partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala

As summarised in Table 6.1, the investigation at Warakurna found that a genuine partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala produced the following results:

1. The decisions that are made regarding the future of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands were seen by all parties as effective and relevant.

2. There were emotional responses from the Walypala, with individuals displaying varying degrees of preparedness to enter into decision-making partnerships with the Yarnangu.

3. The Yarnangu were willing to be involved in a partnership with Walypala who conducted themselves in ways that are acceptable to the Yarnangu.

4. The Yarnangu facilitated change in other parts of the region as a cultural reaction to successfully bringing about change in Warakurna.

The Yarnangu and the Walypala, the investigation documented a number of decisions that were
seen by both groups as reasonable and so were quickly implemented. For example, a post second-
ary schooling facility and a Lands-based school’s board were products of a decision-making pro-
cess that was dominated by appropriate Yarnangu and where certain Walypala contributed their
expertise. Similarly, the chronic problem of student non-attendance at school was almost elimina-
ted in Warakurna during 1993 and 1994 because the Yarnangu felt that their involvement in school
decision-making would be compromised if they allowed their children not to attend school. Other
long-standing school problems were resolved when the Yarnangu came to see that they were in
control of the situation and were able to redefine issues and introduce new solutions. One of these
problems related to the long periods of absence from school that occurred when communities
moved to other places for ceremonies. There were times when the school would be unable to func-
tion effectively for many weeks because the children were attending ceremonies in other communi-
ties. Without compromising traditional responsibilities, the Parent’s Council found that they were
able to persuade the relevant decision-makers to hold ceremonies during school vacations or to
allow the children to be left at home with older relatives while the adults went to the ceremonies.
That is, the development of a partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala saw decisions
being made by the Yarnangu, that were increasingly viewed by all participants as effective. It also
saw the goals of the Yarnangu become more specific and presented in terms that could be reason-
ably achieved.

During the investigation, the Yarnangu developed goals in relation to:

1. The type of schooling and training, including curriculum and pedagogy, that they
   wanted to see their children experience (a two-way approach).

2. The relationship that they wanted to have with the Walypala both in the Ngaanyat-
   jarra Lands and in other places.

3. The objectives of community enterprises and the way they should function.
4. Ways of dealing with the variety of emotional responses from the Walypalafollowing the commencement of significant change.

5. The type of community that they wanted, its culture and ethos, and the way in which terms like ‘development’, ‘accountability’, ‘autonomy’ and ‘authority’ should be defined.

6. The general process by which change should occur.

Kemmis (1988), Jordan (1989), Reaburn (1989), Brown (1990), Harris (1990), Willmett (1991), Randell (1993), Lea and Wolfe (1993), Yunupingu (1993), Wolfe (1994) endorse the findings of the investigation when they state that decisions that are made at the local level using culturally appropriate processes are likely to be successful in achieving the goals of the Aboriginal group. Valance and Valance (1988), Yunupingu (1988), Harris (1990), National Board of Employment, Education and Training (1992), and Lea and Wolfe (1993) add that many Aboriginal groups have clear aspirations that they wish to achieve and are prepared to work to reach them.

This investigation complements the insights that can be gleaned from academic literature in the following ways:

1. It specifies a number of positive results that can emerge as a result of encouraging Aboriginal involvement in decision-making.

2. It shows that Aboriginal people frequently have clear ideas on how they can act to achieve their aspirations, and have skills and a social position in the local community that non-Aboriginal people can never assume.

3. There are indications that Aboriginal people are able to redefine or even resolve problems that non-Aboriginal people perceive as being chronic.
4. It describes a conception of Aboriginal decision-making as a collective process and whole group movement towards achieving community goals (see section 6.1.2). Decisions are made by a large number of individuals who strongly identify with a particular group rather than by a charismatic individual who proposes a goal and then leads the people towards its realisation.

5. It shows that decisions that are made by Aboriginal people, at least in remote communities, are premised on a different rationale to that which dominates the thinking of the wider non-Aboriginal society. Western society conceptualises much of its decision-making in strategic terms with an emphasis upon variables such as cost, availability of particular resources, the achievement of specific outcomes, and the wider impact of decisions. The Yarnangu, however, emphasise the need for decisions to be fair and to preserve the status of family groups within the area while also appreciating the Western concept of strategic planning.

The second likely result from the development of a genuine partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala is that the Walypala will respond in an emotional way, either to support the process or to become strong opponents. A number of findings from the investigation supports descriptions in academic literature of the range of individual and group responses to the prospect or actuality of change (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1987; Yunupingu, 1988; Chadbourne, 1989; Fullan, 1991; Smith, 1992; Carrow-Moffett, 1993).

The negative response to change that the investigation highlighted was displayed in the resistance, fear and defensiveness that was exhibited by the mainly non-school Walypala. As already mentioned, the non-school Walypala strongly opposed the Yarnangu entering into a genuine partnership with the teachers; they saw it as a form of social betrayal. The profound antagonism that grew during the process of change was initially underestimated by the members of the Reference Group. The Walypala carried out certain actions in order to preserve their dominant positions when the school-community partnership began to affect a number of community operations. In situations where the Walypala had to eventually retreat from those dominant positions, they drew new boundaries, redefined the logic behind their authority, and then began to work to reestablish
their previous status. They viewed their resistance to change as a battle.

The behaviour of the non-school Walypala employees is consistent with academic theories that refer to fundamental change as causing an emotional, often negative response in participants who see no personal benefit in the change (Fowler, 1987; Grimmitt, 1987; Cowlishaw, 1988; Chadbourne, 1989; Fullan, 1991; Carrow-Moffett, 1993). It also reinforces the earlier stated theory that initial political action by historically oppressed groups, such as the Yarnangu, to bring about change, should mature into a form of vigilance that can resist attempts by the previously dominant group, like the Walypala, to regain lost power in the belief that only they can act to further the interests of the weaker group (Hall, 1981; Cowlishaw, 1988, p.221; Fullan, 1991; Robertson, 1992; Gamage, 1993; Merelman, 1993).

While non-school Walypala responded to change in a negative fashion, the Walypala teachers portrayed a positive attitude. Their behaviour endorses the comments made by Carrow-Moffett (1993), Drew (1995), Koh (1995) and McIntyre (1995) that a change in power relations between groups will be successful if all participants perceive a personal benefit from the results. While the Yarnangu felt empowered by their increasing control over the community decision-making process, the benefits that the teachers received from the partnership with the community included:

1. A rapid decrease in student non-attendance to the point where it was almost eliminated during 1994.

2. The provision of background advice on the life of specific students that might help to explain school incidents.

3. A sense that there was a purpose in providing students with schooling because it was related to what many young people would be doing when they finished school.

4. A large increase in the number of students attending secondary school, especially in
An improvement in student learning outcomes in all areas.

Community support for the work of the school and the development of a positive tone in the relationships between the school and community.

The development of friendships between individual teachers and members of the community.

A significant decline in the number of incidents of misbehaviour by students.

The almost elimination of vandalism of school property.

An important reason why the Walypala teachers felt that they achieved personal gain in supporting the development of the school-community partnership was that they initiated and were closely involved in the change process throughout all of its stages. The non-school Walypala employees had no control over the change process and so saw themselves as victims of the change rather than having some input into it. Therefore, because they had had little opportunity to ready themselves for change, they resorted to coping strategies such as resistance and reluctant compromise in order to preserve at least some of their position. This is in line with suggestions made by Fullan (1991) that participants in change will resist the change especially if they feel that they have no ‘ownership’ of the process or outcome.

The other reason for the difference between attitudes to change shown by the teachers and the non-school employees is that the non-school Walypala perceived change as an attack on their fundamental values. For example, the Walypala held strongly to the view that the Yarnangu could not look after their own affairs, would send the community into bankruptcy, were not as civilised as them, and were not really interested in controlling their community. When they saw that their
views were inaccurate, they reacted negatively and probably began to doubt their competence as well as their long-standing conception of Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations. As a result, they attempted to impose barriers to prevent change from being successful. They also created a new personal rationale to explain what was happening in the community and drew new lines of separation between them and the Yarnangu in the hope that they would eventually resume their former roles.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the progress that had been made by the Yarnangu towards achieving their objectives was still fluid. A number of gains made between 1991 and 1994, for example, were lost to some extent in the same period because the Yarnangu had insufficient expertise to take advantage of their new authority and also because the non-school Walypala were extremely hostile to the changes that had been made in such a short period of time. In accord with the findings of Cowlishaw (1988) and Wolfe (1994, p. 20), the community was initially poorly equipped to bargain and negotiate with the Walypala for the implementation of change. Similarly, the Walypala (including government agencies) were poorly prepared to respond to community plans. This phenomenon was used by many Yarnangu to sustain the argument that post-secondary training had to be a high priority in order to redress the inequality between the Walypala and the Yarnangu, but it also promised a turbulent future for relations between the Yarnangu and the non-school Walypala.

A third likely result from the development of a genuine partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala was that the Yarnangu will display a willingness to be involved in a partnership with Walypala who conduct themselves in ways that are appropriate to the community. The investigation focussed on the operation of the decision-making system that functioned within the Yarnangu section of the community at Warakurna. It showed that the Yarnangu possessed a system of making decisions that was ignored by the Walypala community. Rather, the Walypala felt that the Yarnangu were lazy, non-cooperative and incapable of running their own affairs because they would not participate in Walypala-dominated decision-making processes. The Walypala, however, did not appreciate the order and unity that generally existed within the Yarnangu community and the
manner in which certain complex actions were undertaken and problems resolved by the Yarnangu with no Walypala involvement. In summary, the Walypala displayed a dismissive attitude towards Yarnangu and so were not able of entering into a genuine partnership with them.

Cowlishaw (1988, p. 226) believes that the lack of appreciation of the “internal dynamics of the Aboriginal community” by the non-Aboriginal community is a major reason why effective Aboriginal community development has been so difficult to achieve. That is, the inability or unwillingness of non-Aboriginal people to closely identify with Aboriginal groups and so learn how traditional processes work, has historically prevented them from recognising the aspirations of Aboriginal groups and appreciating the strategies that the people wish to employ in order to reach their goals.

The Yarnangu felt that the Walypala decision-making system was often confusing and irrelevant and did not take account of their aspirations. Community meetings called by Walypala employees were rare and poorly attended. Those Yarnangu who were involved in the formal Walypala-dominated decision-making structure, perceived their role as ‘rubber stamping’ the decisions that had already been made by the Walypala (also Wolfe, 1994, p. 7). As a result, the Yarnangu frequently chose not to support aspects of community development, because they were contrary to their objectives.

The separate way in which the Walypala and the Yarnangu made decisions supports statements in academic literature that relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are often defined within discriminatory and oppressive contexts and have caused many community development programs to fail (the Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1985; Cowlishaw, 1988; Harris, 1990; the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990, p. 5; Smith, 1992; Jones, 1992; Morris, 1992; Moore, 1993). There has been an unwillingness on the part of non-Aboriginal people to see their work in Aboriginal communities as a partnership with the community (Cowlishaw, 1988, p. 226).
The partnership that existed between the Wa(ypala teachers and the Yarnangu, however, flourished during the period of the investigation because there was a willingness to work together and therefore receive mutual benefits. As mentioned in 6.1.2, power was seen as a way to achieve the aims of each group and so there was a greater appreciation of the value of each participant. The Yarnangu exposed their system of decision-making to the teachers, and the teachers showed a willingness to use the system to achieve the objectives of the school. The example of the way in which the teenage boys were returned to schooling by the community shows the effectiveness of the Yarnangu decision-making process in resolving an important issue in partnership with the teachers. The way in which the schooling was provided to the small community at Karrku is another example of the willingness of the Yarnangu to work in partnership with the Walypala, in this case the district education office in Kalgoorlie. In both cases, the outcome was successful because the Yarnangu were in control of the situation and were able to employ Western expertise when they saw fit. Part of being in control meant that they acknowledged the requirements of various Walypala agents. In the case of the return of the teenagers to school, they knew that the law required that the boys attend school and so they attempted to fulfil that law. In the second example, the Yarnangu appreciated that resources were scarce and a school could not be supplied to such a small group of students. As a result, they devised a model of schooling for Karrku that made the best use of available resources.

In conclusion, the theory concerning the willingness of the Yarnangu to participate in a partnership with the Walypala rests on the willingness of the Walypala to respect the viability of the Yarnangu culture and its ability to conduct community development according to the constraints that apply to other Australians.

The fourth likely result of the development of a genuine partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala is that the Yarnangu are likely to spread change ideas throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. As was described in section 6.1.2, the Yarnangu felt that they should share with other communities the positive changes that occurred in Warakurna in order to meet cultural expectations. Indeed, during 1994, members of the Reference Group spent a lot of time visiting other
places with the aim of encouraging the region to move in the same direction at the same time. Some of the results of the Lands-wide awareness-raising program were:

1. An increase in the number of schools with active parent support groups.

2. The establishment of a Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board which aimed at allowing appropriate Yarnangu decision-makers the right to determine policy and directions for schooling within the area.

3. A sudden increase in the amount of conflict between the Yarnangu and some Walypala community employees.

4. A strong expression of concern by principals at the possibility of their schools coming under the control of Yarnangu decision-making groups.

5. A decision to build a post-secondary schooling institution in the Lands to help meet the training needs of the Yarnangu.

Apart from the cultural requirement to share successes with other communities, the investigation found that the efforts by the Yarnangu to create a change environment throughout the whole of the region were designed to make it difficult for the Walypala to regain their former control. That is, the Yarnangu at Warakurna wanted to increase their situational power in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands so that it could further achieve equality with the Walypala community (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, 1990). By remaining as the only place in the region to have achieved power over their circumstances was seen by many of the Warakurna Yarnangu as leaving them vulnerable to the Walypala who might have wanted to regain their former standing. It also did not satisfy their desire to achieve full equality such as in being able to exercise the rights in other places that they were enjoying in Warakurna.
In conclusion, the Yarnangu at Warakurna recognised that the gains that they had made in controlling their affairs would be compromised if they were not able to share those gains with other communities. They realised that the Walypala community could not compartmentalise its treatment of the communities in the Lands with some places expecting to be treated in different ways than others. Moreover, they recognised that if they wished to institutionalise their achievements, they would need to address a number of large issues concerning the future development of infrastructure in the region.

6.1.4 The situation that would exist if there was no partnership between between the Yarnangu and the Walypala

If there was no genuine partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala, then the Walypala would probably behave in a way that they perceived as being rational and equitable but which most Yarnangu would see as being discriminatory, oppressive and irrelevant (Kringas and Stewart, 1992, pp. 20-33; Moore, 1993, pp. 57-59). Social and cultural stereotypes would be fostered within the Walypala community in order to create a rationale that would justify maintaining strict control over the Yarnangu (Aplet and Lingard, 1992, p. 68; Foster and Harman, 1992, pp. 236-237). The Yarnangu would probably be portrayed as uncooperative and uninterested in issues of community development and the Walypala would be seen as the only group that possessed the skills required to develop the community in the most efficient way. The development of the community would not address issues of inequality and so there would be little reason for the Yarnangu to have a commitment to what, in the opinion of the Walypala, are appropriate initiatives (Yunupingu, 1988).

On the other hand, the Yarnangu would view the Walypala as working in a form of logic that is foreign to them. They would see the Walypala behaviour as ranging from being mean spirited, inconsistent and racist, to paternalistic, regulative and zealous. They would see their opinions as being unable to influence change in the community (McCay, 1988) and would resort to alternative decision-making processes to maintain internal order and achieve some measure of progress. It is
also likely that the Yarnangu would attempt to manipulate the Walypala decision-makers to achieve short term gains for their family members in order to undermine or confuse the objectives of the Walypala but, in so doing, possibly gaining an unfair advantage over the rest of the community. They may also respond with hostility and cause conflict in the community (Singh, 1990). Whatever the response, the Yarnangu would not see their goals realised.

The investigation showed that the behaviour of many Walypala employees before the Yarnangu assumed control over many community functions was characterised by the following features:

1. A strong, even passionate, belief that their actions were in the best interests of the Yarnangu and that the Yarnangu were unable to make the sort of decisions that would be to the benefit of their community decisions.

2. A fear of entering into open dialogue with the Yarnangu on community matters but rather holding community information as secret. This secrecy showed itself in the Walypala physically isolating themselves from other members of the community.

3. Attempting to isolate individuals whom they viewed as being strong opponents of Walypala. This was done by compromising them by exposing their lack of skills such as in financial management, or by allowing them to enter into debt with the community (a debt that was controlled by a Walypala employee). This feature became more significant as Warakurna grew in size and economic complexity.

4. Offering trivial and insignificant improvements in community operations but without having to surrender any authority to control the direction of the community, especially from an economic point of view.

5. Entering into strong verbal conflict with their opponents in English with the expectation that the opponents, especially if they did not employ English as a first language, would
withdraw their opposition.

6. Minimising specific Yarnangu opposition by offering benefits to some people above what the rest of the community could expect to receive. The provision of vehicles to particular men was a successful way of ‘buying’ the opposition.

7. Stalling on issues to do with fundamental change in the hope that the demand for change would go away.

8. Making decisions without consulting the community decision-makers, or by informing them after the decisions had been made.

9. Inconsistent but frugal provision of community services so that the population had to focus their attention on ensuring that their basic physical needs were met rather than dealing with issues of power and change.

10. Promoting the belief that ‘community development’ referred only to plant and machinery, infrastructure and business facilities, and the provision of opportunities for recreation. It did not include the complex issues of culture, society, education and control which could only be fostered through ongoing dialogue with appropriate members of the community.

The points that characterised the relationship between the Yarnangu and the Walypala before the change process commenced during 1992 are similar to those referred to in Chapter Two, section 2.6.4, in the discussion on how dominant classes oppress and manipulate minority classes in an attempt to preserve their position. The results of the action are the continued disempowerment of minority groups, limited opportunities for community development, and the promotion of inequality, assimilation, and racist ideology. As Jones (1992) and Moore (1993) conclude, the dominance of non-Aboriginal people over Aboriginal groups allows racism to pervade the political, economic, linguistic, cultural and identity structures in relation to the distribution of power and the way in
which 'truth' and 'knowledge' are constructed.

6.1.5 The changes that must occur in order for a genuine partnership to exist between the Yarnangu and the Walypala

The investigation at Warakurna highlighted the following prerequisites to the development of a genuine partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala:

1. All participants must be prepared to take steps of faith in the face of uncertainty.

2. There must be a fundamental reorientation in the ideologies, structures and institutions that construct the philosophy of the community.

3. All levels of Walypala authority within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands as well as outside the region must accept the right of the Yarnangu to run their own affairs.

Once the Yarnangu decided to embark upon a process of change to redistribute power within the community, they quickly realised that they did not have clear strategies on how to achieve their goals. They also became extremely distressed at the behaviour of the non-school Walypala and sometimes doubted that their actions to foster change would give the Yarnangu community more autonomy. Their reaction bears out the principle that once an oppressed and historically marginalised group gains the power of autonomy over their lives, the use of that power involves steps of faith in implementing a series of tentative strategies that have little precedence to build upon (Reaburn, 1989; Harris, 1990; Randell, 1990; Fullan, 1991, 1993; Wolfe, 1994). In recognising their lack of experience, the Yarnangu took advantage of opportunities to increase their knowledge of school and community development. They visited a number of places to see what other Aboriginal people were able to achieve when they took over community responsibilities. They also recognised their need to obtain further Western education and to reinterpret the resulting knowledge and skills in a way that would preserve the integrity of their culture. As a result, the com-
munity was better equipped to institutionalize the gains that had been achieved through members taking on positions of decision-making authority in the community (also in Yunupingu, 1988).

The second prerequisite to forming a genuine partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala is that there must be a reorientation of the ideologies, structures, institutions, and the distribution of power that form the philosophy and operations of the community. The investigation centred upon the redistribution of decision-making power in Warakurna and, to some extent, throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. The Yarnangu were successful in taking control of the school and then the rest of the community because they believed that it was their right to control community enterprises and to employ the Walypala to assist them. Their efforts were stimulated by the emergence of an ideology that rejected economic, social, and cultural submission to other groups but promoted a strong desire for them to assert their right to run their affairs which, up until then, had existed only in political principles such as 'self determination' and 'self management'.

On the other hand, the beliefs and values that motivated the non-school Walypala to exercise power in the community did not change despite losing control over the institutions and processes that supported their power. They claimed that the community would be unable to control its own affairs and that they would eventually be called upon to resume their former roles and responsibilities. The non-school Walypala were not prepared to change their ideology regarding the equality of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, would not support the development of Yarnangu leadership and, therefore, were reluctant to provide them with access to the power that they required.

Most of the teachers at Warakurna were initially reluctant to accept that their institutionally recognized power was unable to develop the school according to the needs of the community. They soon saw personal benefit, however, in the shift in power and so changed their personal ideology to one of increasing commitment to working in a genuine partnership with the Yarnangu. There was no ongoing conflict with the Yarnangu over the changes that occurred in the community because the ideology practised by the Walypala teachers was supportive of the right of the Yarnangu to run their affairs. The teachers practised 'delegated authority' (section 6.1.2) and saw
themselves as servants of the community, there to help. I suggest that the implementation of the philosophy that there is mutual benefit in Yarnangu control over the school is the main reason why the Yarnangu-Walypala partnership in school development was successful. As Bob Somerville (superintendent, Kalgoorlie Education District) agreed in a written personal communication (11 August 1994):

In spite of problems we've had in various communities lately, and in spite of misunderstandings that have occurred from time to time, everyone in the Lands is talking about education and doing things about it. Education has become a priority to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and they [Aboriginal people] are beginning to take control over it. A lot of the reason behind the strong image of education is because of the work of the Warakurna Parents' Council.

Academic sources heavily focus upon the need to change the ideology of individuals and institutions before being able to achieve fundamental change that can be sustained over a long period of time. They state that non-Aboriginal dominance over Aboriginal people has been preserved by an ideology that has defined the fabric of society according to a particular 'truth' and rationality about each group (Muecke, 1992; Pettman, 1992; Foster and Harman, 1992). They also point out that the ideology functions to frustrate and oppress Aboriginal people by not allowing them to have power over their affairs (Saha and Keeves, 1990; Aplet and Lingard, 1992; Jones, 1992; Moore, 1993). Governments, in particular, are reluctant to look at change initiatives that may challenge the allocation of power between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups (Dawson, 1989; Foster and Harman, 1992).

Most authors conclude that a transformation in the relations between groups will cause conflict and so are pessimistic about the chances of Aboriginal people generally being able to achieve autonomy in community development (Dawson, 1989; Wolfe, 1994). The findings of this investigation, however, indicate that transformation in the fundamental relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can be a positive process if both groups see personal benefit in the change and do not perceive one another as posing a threat to their personal ideology or system of values. It concludes that there are Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who are prepared to embark upon a
change process towards an end where a genuine active partnership is established.

The third prerequisite to the development of a genuine partnership is that all levels of Walypala authority must accept the right of the Yarnangu to run their own affairs. That is, even though fundamental change to the distribution of power at the local level may be successful, little progress will be made if external authorities including government are not prepared to endorse the changes.

Significant change occurred very quickly in Warakurna with the local population taking over their own affairs. External authorities, however, responded to the transformation with either ambivalence or concern and uncertainty. Some examples of these responses include:

1. Opposition by the district superintendent of the role being played by the Warakurna School Parent’s Council because of his belief that the parents were not able to control the school. He subsequently stated in the Australasian Post (25 June 1994, p. 32) that it was his objective that communities in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands would eventually take control of their schools (section 5.1).

2. Direct resistance by organisations to the desire by some of the Yarnangu to investigate opening up some of the land to mining exploration despite the requirement that these organisations represent the aspirations of the Yarnangu (section 4.6.4).

3. The Department of Community Development (Northern Territory) insisted that it was right to provide funds for the establishment of a play group for children too young to attend school despite frequent statements by the Yarnangu that they wanted an out-of-school facility for teenagers.

4. Government agencies regularly applied pressure to the community to ensure that particular accounting and audit procedures were followed and this made the Yarnangu feel unprepared to carry out the responsibilities associated with being in control of the community despite the
knowledge that they could call upon Waılıpa knowledge that they could call upon Waılıpa expertise.

These examples highlight the following general principles concerning the negative way in which agencies may respond to change:

1. Attempts to unsettle the community by overwhelming them with a raft of Western-derived responsibilities and accountability mechanisms in order to expose their lack of formal training (the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990, p. 7; Gamage, 1993, p. 145).

2. Refusal to accept the element of uncertainty that is contained in some of the strategies to achieve community goals, and that the community would probably make some mistakes as it developed its unique paradigm for community development (Randell, 1990).

3. Ignoring the proper expression of community goals and recommending quite different objectives (Sarason and Davis, 1979, p. 361; Kringis & Stewart, 1992, p. 23).

4. Promoting 'self determination' at a policy level, but using bureaucratic regulations to deny it in practice and so actually implementing a policy of paternalism (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 58).

5. Partial release of power to the community but withholding key elements so causing the community to become frustrated by only being able to manage their affairs to a limited extent (a form of delegation).

In summary, the negative response from externally-based Waılıpa to the changes that occurred in Warakurna meant that the Yarnangu had to engage in persistent political action to force various agencies, especially government departments, to negotiate a new relationship. This process was still occurring at the conclusion of the investigation.
6.2 Summary and conclusions

This chapter has briefly analysed the 'story' in Chapters Four and Five by forming theories and principles and then discussing them in the light of what academic sources have stated in Chapter Two.

This inquiry focussed on changes that occurred within the school and community at Warakurna where the Yarnangu were able to achieve a high level of school and community authority between 1991 and 1994. It also described the way in which the gains that were made in Warakurna began to influence the thinking and activity of other communities within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

Despite their general lack of formal schooling and experience in interacting with Western organisations and structures, the Yarnangu were keen to be involved in a genuine decision-making partnership with the Walypala teachers. This partnership was a catalyst to the Yarnangu desiring to have a greater influence in the running of all aspects of their community so that they could start to move towards achieving their aspirations. As a result, some of the theories and principles that emerged from the inquiry dealt with issues that pertained to general community development rather than school development, the initial focus of the research.

This chapter showed that the involvement by the Yarnangu in the school-community partnership had to be consistent with the Yarnangu social, political and cultural context. It confirmed that the Yarnangu could combine traditional and Western processes to control community affairs and include appropriate Yarnangu and Walypala working in a partnership of apparent equality but under Yarnangu authority. The chapter also highlighted the emotional response by individuals and groups to change as challenges were made to the historic distribution of power and the ideology that defined the concepts of legitimacy and rationality. A final area of importance emphasised by the chapter was the significance of a small group of Yarnangu who were approved by the traditional decision-makers and were charged with encouraging change and creating widespread community awareness.
Perhaps one of the most significant areas emphasised by this investigation, however, was that fundamental change involves a series of steps of faith by a number of individuals. The Walypala teachers commenced the process by stepping away from their traditional positions of power in the school and took the view that the school could benefit from having the Yarnangu assist with decision-making. The Yarnangu believed that they had an important role to play in the school and that the teachers were genuine in their offer to commence a decision-making partnership. They were confident that they could take on responsibilities that had historically been in the hands of the Walypala. In spite of considerable opposition, Walypala and Yarnangu participants shared their message of change around the Ngaanyatjarra Lands because they believed that the changes at Warakurna would be of benefit to other communities. The Yarnangu also stepped into the area of community governance by insisting on exercising their theoretical right to control their own affairs in spite of considerable opposition.

In Chapter Seven, I will conclude this thesis by briefly reviewing its aims, methods and findings. I will also describe the limitations of the inquiry and make a number of recommendations for further research. Another aspect of the next chapter will be to make some suggestions about the implications of this research for the wider community, including government.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
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7.0 Introduction

This thesis has described the social, political and cultural transformation that occurred in the Warakurna community between 1992 and 1994. Personal and group relationships, expectations, beliefs and functions were reconceptualised at least for that period of time. In particular, a rapid increase in Yarnangu involvement in the philosophical development and operations of the school was quickly translated into revisions of the way in which issues of community development were defined.

In Chapter One, the purpose of the investigation was introduced. It described the location of Warakurna and provided a summary of the physical appearance of the school as well as its student and staff population. I commenced the inquiry by stating the personal view that the buildings and other physical resources at the school had advanced considerably since I left in 1980, but that the nature of school-community interaction had declined from being one of mutual dependence to almost non-existent. I was interested in discovering whether the Yarnangu were interested in recreating some sort of school-community partnership now that I had returned as the principal. I concluded the chapter by confirming that the research proposal had the support of the Yarnangu community.

In Chapter Two, I reviewed some of the academic literature that was relevant to the investigation. The main issues of focus included:

1. Government policies regarding community participation in schools.

2. Past treatment of Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal individuals and institutions.
3. Policy recommendations in order to overcome inequality and disadvantage in education.

4. Conceptions of power and a review of the process of change, including the effects of changes in the distribution of power on the well being of individuals and groups.

5. An introduction to the way in which theory could emerge as a result of the investigation.

Chapter Three worked through the process whereby an eclectic paradigm combining the constructivist, critical and action-oriented philosophies of research was designed for use in the investigation. The chapter also described the data-collection strategies that were employed and the phases by which the field work was undertaken. Other sections of the chapter included a review of the ethical concerns that had to be dealt with in order to collect useful data in partnership with the community, the way in which the research team had to behave during the inquiry in order to respect cultural protocols and support community aspirations, and the timetable that directed the research process. The chapter concluded by recommending a process by which grounded theory could emerge.

Chapters Four and Five described the critical events that were relevant to the topic under investigation and occurred during the period of research at Warakurna and throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Among the descriptions were those that established patterns, trends and eventually the categories that were the building blocks of grounded theory.

Chapter Six described the theories that developed during the inquiry and discussed them in the light of findings from the academic literature in Chapter Two.

In the next section of this chapter, I will address the limitations that affected the design and conduct of this study but will emphasise that the constraints were largely imposed by the community and were necessary in order to guarantee ongoing community support and confidence.
7.1 Limitations of the research

Any study that occurs in a cross-cultural setting must be careful to employ culturally appropriate methods of inquiry. In this investigation, I was working with Aboriginal people, many of whom had minimal English, were suspicious of non-Aboriginal researchers, were socially and culturally separated from the non-Aboriginal community, and had been excluded from the power to control important aspects of their lives. Caution, therefore, had to be shown in the way the researcher behaved, how data were collected and analysed, what was written as a description of the findings, and the way in which the findings were communicated outside of the community.

Even the initial approval to commence the inquiry was heavily debated within the community and resulted in specific criteria that had to be strictly observed in order to assure the people that the study would respect various cultural protocols as well as achieve results that would be of benefit to the community. A Reference Group was formed during 1992 and this consisted of four Yarnangu men who were accountable to the traditional decision-makers, the 'old men'. Members of the Reference Group were appointed to help conduct the data collection as well as to analyse, process, and generally monitor the inquiry.

Initial direction provided by the community guaranteed the support of the community as long as the various research criteria were observed. Research findings, therefore, achieved a depth and frankness that could not have been gained had the inquiry ignored the expectations of the people. Community governance over the conduct of the inquiry, however, brought with it a number of restrictions in terms of objectives, methods and the nature of results. For example, in regard to the initial objectives of the study, the community made it clear that the study had to help them to achieve their short term goals. That is, the bulk of the inquiry had to be restricted to a single community and pursue certain specific objectives. Moreover, there were severe restrictions on data-collection methods such as with the limited use of photography and the total banning of video recording.

The community also moved the investigation into areas not initially part of the aims of the
inquiry. For example, as the investigation of school-community relations started to produce encouraging findings regarding the ability of the Yarnangu to achieve decision-making authority in the school, the community began to focus the inquiry on increasing Yarnangu involvement in the operations of the rest of the community. They then decided to take the findings of increasing school-community activity to other communities within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

While the objectives of the inquiry were adjusted from time to time, so also aspects of research methodology changed in order for them to be consistent with the expectations of the community and the enthusiasm of the Reference Group. The timetable of inquiry, for example, was entirely in the hands of the community with data collection sometimes going ahead at a frenetic pace while, at other times, proceeding very slowly because of the greater priority of ceremonies or football carnivals. Moreover, at the beginning of the research, I was the main investigator, but as the inquiry became more embedded into the life of the community, Yarnangu members of the Reference Group became increasingly responsible for data collection. My role changed to become less at the forefront of interacting with the community and more one of facilitating data organisation, analysis and writing.

Perhaps the most important result of the community establishing strict criteria by which the study could occur was that I concluded that qualitative research processes should be employed, particularly because of the inductive nature of the study. The following criteria drew me towards that conclusion:

1. The need to investigate issues within the context in which they were occurring.

2. The inclusion of the biases and ideologies of the researchers and other participants in the investigation.

3. The requirement that there should be no predetermined direction of inquiry or other restrictions imposed by the Walyypalaresearcher.

The community wanted the research findings to suggest theories and principles that would
focus on the case that was being investigated and recommend strategic action that would further encourage the redistribution of power between the Yarnangu and the Walypala. That is, emphasis was placed on the grounded nature of theory and the Reference Group had no interest in suggesting sophisticated theory that would apply to communities outside of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, although section 7.2 makes some general recommendations to that end.

In summary, the investigation achieved the aim of obtaining detailed information from members of the community according to methods and protocols that were established by community decision-makers. The information collected was extensive and was gained from all sections of the community. The thoroughness of the field work is probably the main strength of the research. The community drove the inquiry and changed its direction on a number of occasions in order to help it to achieve its goals. As a result, data collection and analysis techniques had to be selected and adapted to ensure that the research was a tool for use by the community but conducted in such a way as to maintain its integrity and academic rigour.

In the next section, I will review the study in terms of its aims and findings.

7.2 Aims and findings of the inquiry

The initial aim of this research was to investigate increasing the involvement of the Yarnangu community in the school at Warakurna. The focus widened, however, during the investigation to include the way in which the Yarnangu could gain control of the community and how it could share its successes with other communities in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. The result was a series of theoretical statements and principles regarding:

1. The response of individuals and groups when power is redistributed.

2. The likely outcome if power if not redistributed.

3. The influence of ideology on the behaviour and attitudes of individuals, structures and institutions.
4. The need for the *Yarnangu* to be involved in Western institutions in partnership with appropriate *Walypala* but without surrendering their culture or traditional responsibilities and practices.

5. The need for ongoing political action to bring about change in order to help the *Yarnangu* achieve their aspirations.

6. The conditions under which an Aboriginal community might be willing to become actively involved in the school and other enterprises.

7. The effects of community governance over school operations and directions.

8. The sharing of ideas for community empowerment with other places in the region.

A number of recommendations and conclusions have emerged from the theory in this study. One important recommendation is that the keenness of the *Yarnangu* to be involved in the development of the school and wider community should be taken advantage of by policymakers and made part of the culture, daily lifestyle and aspirations of the *Yarnangu*. That is, participants in the development of the community should accept that a *Yarnangu-Walypala* partnership can only be successful as long as it is consistent with the cultural heritage of the *Yarnangu*. There is an important place for a contribution from the knowledge and skills of the Western tradition but it needs to be viewed from a *Yarnangu* perspective.

Another important conclusion from the investigation is that a successful *Walypala-Yarnangu* partnership is dependent upon the type of *Walypala* who are employed in the community. The employees must be able to work under the principle of delegated authority. That is, while possibly controlling community operations, the *Walypala* should place themselves under the authority of *Yarnangu* decision-makers and act as servants of the community. Power must ultimately be located in *Yarnangu* hands but the daily operations of the community should be conducted according to the principles of cooperation, equality, honest communication, and colla-
boration between the Yarnangu community and Walypala employees.

An example of a successful Walypala-Yarnangu partnership may be seen in the development of the Parents' Council. Despite considerable opposition from sections of the Walypala community in Warakurna, the council became a successful decision-making body that employed a number of political skills to challenge many cherished perceptions that were held by the Walypala about the ability of Aboriginal people to control their lives and achieve community aspirations.

In reviewing the short history of the Parents' Council, I have been able to identify five recommendations which are summarised below:

1. The school council system should be institutionalised at Warakurna as an important means of fostering communication between the school and community and as a political organisation that can deal with situations of apparent inequality.

2. The school council should investigate ways of fostering a two-way partnership in all areas of school operations, such as curriculum development, the recruitment of suitable Walypala staff, and Yarnangu teacher training within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

3. All Yarnangu and Walypala members of the community, including those not expected to be affected by change, should be regularly informed about what is happening in projects that involve the introduction of significant change.

4. Appropriate support should be provided to all those who are affected by change so that they can deal with issues of concern and be able to accommodate change as part of their personal experience.

5. Those at the vanguard of change, such as members of the leadership group, should receive training and support in carrying out their responsibilities in facilitating change.

Achieving institutional power in the school or wider community and then retaining it over time, however, requires sophisticated skills and strategies. This recognition led the Yarnangu to ser-
iously examine the role of Western schooling in their lives and to make certain decisions particularly in the development of post-primary training opportunities. It is recommended, therefore, that post-compulsory school training opportunities be made available in appropriate forms to allow the Yarnangu to prepare to assume as much control of community functions as they wish. Moreover, schooling should employ the sort of technology that can make on-site study a viable option so that students do not have to leave their home region in order to gain the credentials needed for employment in the communities.

Institutionalising decision-making authority into the culture of the community requires that the Yarnangu integrate Western-derived, formal, decision-making procedures, such as meetings and written communication, into traditional practices and values. The implementation of a private and informal process of making decisions that excludes most of the Walypala community is inconsistent with the notion that a partnership between groups will assist in the development of the community. This investigation, therefore, recommends that traditional decision-making processes be employed as much as possible with support from Western decision-making methods to make it possible for the Yarnangu to properly control and design proposals for community development and to maximise the opportunities for the resulting initiatives to be successful. It is also recommended that management training opportunities be offered to Yarnangu adults in order to help them to create a model that integrates the Yarnangu and Walypala methods of making decisions as well as to assist them to clarify community objectives and develop strategies to achieve them. A complementary recommendation is that Walypala employees receive regular professional development to equip them with a sound knowledge of Yarnangu beliefs and ways of behaving so enabling them to become increasingly aware of community aspirations and the need for a two-way partnership to achieve them.

The significant changes that occurred at Warakurna were not confined to one community. Much of 1994 was spent in assisting the Yarnangu communities throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands to take control of the development of schooling in their communities. A recommendation that emerged as a result of the Lands-wide role of the Yarnangu is that a structure should be developed within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands that can make decisions on issues to do with schooling. This body should operate under Yarnangu governance and be assisted by appropriate
The investigation emphasised a number of themes in regard to the valuable role played by the Reference Group in promoting *Yarnangu* control in schools both at Warakurna and throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. The actions of the Reference Group suggest the following recommendations:

1. Appropriate *Yarnangu* individuals should play the most important role in resolving problems that occur within their school communities. The *Yarnangu*, therefore, should hold authoritative positions within decision-making organisations in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

2. Since the *Yarnangu* prefer to move as an entire group towards change, knowledge should be shared with all members of the community in recognition of long-standing protocols before decisions are made. Workshops, meetings, conferences and other forums should be held along lines that are conducive to appropriate *Yarnangu* decision-makers feeling comfortable to participate.

3. Sound research data are best collected by the *Yarnangu* themselves and subsequent analysis and interpretation should also be conducted mainly by the *Yarnangu*.

These recommendations are in line with academic theories that emphasise the Aboriginal 'voice' in decision-making, problem solving, and research. They also state that effective change only occurs when it is consistent with the culture of the group and so Aboriginal people should hold positions of authority in non-Aboriginal organisations so that decisions are relevant to the needs of the Aboriginal people and can be fully implemented.

Towards the end of the investigation, a three-year strategic plan outlining school development within the Lands was written to ensure that the gains made between 1992 and 1994 would not be lost. A recommendation, therefore, is that the *Yarnangu*-designed strategic plan for the development of schooling in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands should be fully implemented and that a cycle of planning be commenced to ensure that another plan is ready before the commencement
of the next triennium.

The information that I received from respondents during the investigation was extensive. I believe that one reason why I had access to many individuals was because I had a long background in the Lands and had established my credibility before embarking upon this project. Moreover, I worked closely with the four highly respected Yarnangu men, who comprised the Reference Group. These men were often responsible for collecting information, especially from other Yarnangu, in an appropriate way. Bernard Newberry was particularly important in maintaining the momentum and significance of the Reference Group as a research body. His extensive knowledge of the Western world coupled with his high standing within the Yarnangu community made it possible for him to act as a link between two cultures. He was able to involve the other Yarnangu members of the Reference Group in the investigation in a way that valued their contribution but he also consulted with me at a sophisticated level.

A further reason why I was able to accumulate valuable data was that I was able to establish an extensive system of communications with the community through the Reference Group and the Parents’ Council. People knew what was happening at every stage of the study because I was able to tap into the informal system of communication and decision-making that flourished within the Yarnangu section of the community. A final reason why I was able to conduct an extensive research program was that advice, suggestions, complaints and concerns had a direct impact upon school-community operations. That is, the study was not seen by the participants as just an information-collecting exercise with no benefit for them. Rather, they could see that the data were used in such a way as to have a positive effect on individuals and organisations within the community.

It is recommended, therefore, that non-Aboriginal people who wish to conduct research in remote Aboriginal communities carry out their investigations in partnership with the Aboriginal community where local Aboriginal people are heavily involved in data collection and analysis. Another recommendation is that researchers take the time to establish their standing with the community before embarking upon any investigations if they wish to obtain useful information from local people. The need to have an honest and trusting relationship with the Aboriginal
community is essential if a researcher wants to obtain data that truly represents the views of the people.

This investigation was a series of steps of faith by a number of individuals. The Walypala teachers commenced the process by stepping away from their traditional positions of power in the school and took the view that the school could benefit from having the Yarnangu assist with decision-making. The Yarnangu believed that they had an important role to play in the school and that the Walypala teachers were genuine in their offer to establish a decision-making partnership. They were confident that they could take on responsibilities that had historically been in the hands of the Walypala. In spite of considerable opposition, Walypala and Yarnangu participants believed that their decisions were going to be of benefit to the long-term future of schooling in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

The inquiry showed that the Yarnangu were willing to be involved in the school as long as that involvement was genuine, offered them the opportunity to control decision-making, was backed up with the support and expertise of appropriate Walypala partners, and integrated traditional processes with Western methods. That is, the Yarnangu at Warakurna were willing to control the development of their community as long as that control was not tempered with any oppressive expectations or procedures.

The thrust of the conclusions from this investigation may be transferable to other Aboriginal communities but, because the investigation focussed on Warakurna only, the methods by which findings were achieved are unique to the community and other communities will have to map their own process of change. Based on the theories that emerged from the inquiry, however, the following principles may be relevant to other locations:

1. Change is an ongoing political process and causes strong emotional responses in individuals as historic power allocations are challenged.

2. Power must be redistributed between groups before specific fundamental change can occur.
3. Non-Aboriginal employees in schools and communities must accept the authority of their Aboriginal employers. While the non-Aboriginal employees may possess expertise in operational areas associated with their employment, they must remember that they work under the authority of Aboriginal people.

4. External authorities must endorse Aboriginal control over decision-making in various school and wider community functions and not attempt to limit that control through the use of strategies associated with reintroducing their historic power.

5. Because there are few precedents for Aboriginal progress in achieving control over their schools, decisions should be viewed as tentative steps and this may mean that some mistakes will be made. The mistakes should not be used as justification for non-Aboriginal individuals or groups, including governments, to attempt to reestablish their historic authority.

6. Many of the current 'problems' in Aboriginal schooling such as non-attendance of students at school and a reluctance by parents to cooperate with decision-making agencies, are symptoms of the belief by Aboriginal people that Western institutions and processes do not represent them. The genuine involvement of Aboriginal people in controlling their schools may overcome many of these perceived problems. This involvement is appropriate at all levels of decision-making, including government.

7. The conduct of research into Aboriginal communities should be under the authority of the community, philosophically and operationally. The role of the researcher should be that of facilitator and consultant. This role can only be performed if strong relationships exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants and if Aboriginal people feel that the inquiry is likely to be of benefit to them. This means that non-Aboriginal researchers must live in the community that is under investigation for a long period of time in order to form genuine friendships with Aboriginal co-researchers. 'Hit and run' research is unlikely to yield reliable and useful information.

8. Government policies of self-management and self-determination must be gen-
uine in their philosophical aim of allowing Aboriginal people to make their own decisions, including the expenditure of funds, and work towards achieving their aspirations.

9. As mentioned in point seven, Aboriginal people must be involved in all stages of research where they are the main topic of inquiry. This means that appropriate decision-makers should endorse the objectives of the research and Aboriginal co-researchers must assist non-Aboriginal or non-community individuals to conduct field work and analyse data towards forming theory. Finally, community members must have the right to control what publicity is given to the research findings.

In the next section of this chapter, I will make a number of recommendations for further research.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

This inquiry appears to have generated as many questions as it has answered. The research initially aimed at examining the effect that fostering a school-community decision-making partnership would have on school development. It widened considerably during the course of the investigation, but as the study proceeded some issues emerged that demanded close investigation but could not be considered because of various limitations of the inquiry. There were also trends that were becoming evident during the research but were insufficiently developed by the time that the inquiry concluded to justify examination. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to note these areas and recommend that they be investigated in the future. The topics of investigation include:

1. A review of the operations of various organisations that were mentioned in this research. The operations of the Ngaanyatjarra Council, for example, came under review, particularly in its ability to represent the aspirations of the Yarnangu. Furthermore, an examination of the role of mining interests in the area was commenced in the final months of this research. Finally, the actions of branches within the Education Department were discussed during the research and suggestions made on how they could provide a better service to the Ngaanyatjarra
Lands. Research, therefore, could be conducted into the future conduct of these organisations to see if they are able to meet the needs of the Yarnangu.

2. The way in which the benefits of initial change in the power relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups can be maintained over time. This topic would be of value because this investigation only focussed on the commencement of change and it was very clear that some non-school Walypala intended to reestablish their control at a later date. A related topic of investigation would be how the Yarnangu can achieve further gains in the control of community functions.

3. The long-term social and economic relationship between the Yarnangu and the Walypala (those who live in Warakurna and those who are external agents) in the light of changing power relations between the groups.

4. How the Yarnangu who have achieved decision-making power in one area are able to use that authority in other aspects of their lives (family and community).

5. How conflict can be minimised during the process of change. Conflict caused considerable distress for those who were at the forefront of promoting change at Warakurna. Further research on the effects of conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups and individuals in a variety of remote communities during periods of fundamental change could produce some valuable findings.

6. Ways of creating career paths and performance management processes for Walypala employees in Aboriginal communities that would see the knowledge and skills of these individuals grow so that they can interact with Aboriginal people in an appropriate way and where Aboriginal authority would not be challenged. The findings from this field of research would influence investigations into conflict between groups as described in point five.

7. Research into providing alternative opportunities for on-site post-secondary training in remote Aboriginal communities. The need for teacher education was the area that
received considerable attention by the *Yarnangu* during the investigation and so it is reasonable that this be the first inquiry to be initiated.

8. The establishment and growth of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board.

9. Ways of expanding the role of members of the Warakurna School Parent’s Council into areas such as curriculum development and classroom pedagogy, possibly in association with the development of an on-site teacher education program.

### 7.4 Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to investigate the way in which the *Yarnangu* and the *Walypala* at Warakurna formed a decision-making partnership in the school and wider community. I wanted to see whether the community wanted to work in partnership with the *Walypala* teachers and the effect that such a partnership might have on the operations of the school. I did not initially seek to investigate the effect that changes in school governance might have on the non-school *Walypala*. Nor did I anticipate that I would spend so much time examining the role of conflict between individuals and have to deal with so much personal pressure from some *Walypala* who wished to reinstate former patterns of behaviour and the associated ideology. Moreover, I did not expect to see the changes that occurred in the school flow into other communities and cause outside agents to reexamine their conduct. Similarly, the idea that the changes at Warakurna school might contribute to the creation of the Principal Consultant’s position responsible for the conduct of schooling within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands was never considered. Nor did I envisage that the *Yarnangu* from Warakurna would be involved in resolving disputes in other Land’s communities.

Because the *Yarnangu* had considerable control over the direction and conduct of the study, perhaps I should have appreciated that unforeseen phenomena might emerge. Certainly my co-researchers and I experienced self-doubt and concern as to whether we were acting in a way that would benefit the *Yarnangu*. At times, the tension within the community was extreme and conflict regularly erupted as non-school *Walypala* in Warakurna or individuals in other com-
munities attacked what was happening and the directions that were being suggested.

At the conclusion of the study, however, we felt that our efforts had been worthwhile and that the trends that had commenced would not be reversed. Members of the Reference Group expanded their commitment to change by challenging a number of issues that were not related to schooling. When the inquiry concluded (December 1994), a number of people were undertaking other projects that were aimed at placing more sections of the community directly in the hands of the Yarnangu. While the success of specific actions between 1991 and 1994 was at best tentative, an important legacy of this study was that a way of thinking had been established and steps of faith embarked upon in ways that gave many Yarnangu a sense of belief in their capacity to control their own affairs. I am hopeful that the benefits of this research will be evident for some time to come.
CHAPTER EIGHT

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REFERENCES


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APPENDIX ONE

DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES
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DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this appendix is to describe the theories that emerged during the investigation at Warakurna. The appendix commences by presenting an overview of the development of the theories. It highlights the emergence of substantive theory from core categories, properties and integrated concepts. The process that led to the emergence of theory during the investigation (also see section 3.8) is shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1
Sequence for the emergence of theory

**Level One**
Open coding of all incidents to form tentative categories (initial stage of comparative analysis, no preconceptions as data is collected)

**Level Two**
Core categories which highlight grounded hypotheses

**Level Three**
Properties of hypotheses in the categories (development of concepts)

**Level Three**
Integration of various properties and categories (movement towards concepts)

**Level Four**
Substantive theory from the concepts that are suggested during the process of integrating properties and categories
In the next section of this chapter, I will tabulate the theory that emerged during the investigation at Warakurna in a series of charts. I will detail the theory as it emerged in two stages. The first stage documents the development of theory through the headings of core categories and grounded hypotheses, properties of hypotheses, integrated properties and categories (Table 1.1). The second stage (Table 1.2) brings the integrated properties and categories together and documents substantive theory.
1.1 The development of substantive theory from the inquiry at Warakurna

Table 1.1
Towards substantive theory from the investigation at Warakurna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core categories</th>
<th>A, 3, D, E, F (documented in Chapter Four, section 4.2.1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Grounded hypotheses | * Members of the Yarnangu community have historically been excluded from involvement in decision-making on matters to do with them.  
* Community initiatives designed only by the Walypala (excluding the Yarnangu) are likely to be unsuccessful.  
* Members of the Walypala community are reluctant to encourage the Yarnangu to assume positions of authority. |
| Properties      | * The Walypala wish to retain traditional positions of authority in roles and dominance over the Yarnangu.  
* The Yarnangu are disadvantaged in that their opinions are irrelevant to the perceptions of the Walypala.  
* Decisions made by the Walypala without effective consultation with the Yarnangu will have limited impact.  
* The Yarnangu are inexperienced in making key decisions on issues that affect them. |
| Integrated concept A | Power must be redistributed between the Yarnangu and Walypala in order for a decision-making partnership based on Yarnangu autonomy to develop and thereby increase the likelihood of decisions being effective and relevant to the Yarnangu. |
| Components      | * A partnership should exist between the Yarnangu and the Walypala to increase the effectiveness of decisions.  
* Power should be redistributed from the Walypala to the Yarnangu in order to encourage greater Yarnangu autonomy. |
<p>| Substantive theory | see Table 1.2 (Appendix One) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core categories (see Table 2.6)</th>
<th>B, E, F, G (documented in Chapter Four, section 4.3.1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Grounded hypotheses             | * Most Walypala are inexperienced at involving the Yarnangu in decision-making activities.  
                                     * The Yarnangu are inexperienced in being involved in decision-making processes that derive from a Walypala tradition.  
                                     * The Yarnangu have historically been excluded from decision-making processes as part of the inequality in the distribution of power between the groups.  
                                     * Decisions, institutions and structures, and values and beliefs that underpin Western society may not reflect all of the aspirations of the Yarnangu. |
| Properties                      | * The Walypala lack a substantial precedent in working in a decision-making partnership with the Yarnangu based on Yarnangu autonomy.  
                                     * The Yarnangu are inexperienced in effectively participating in decision-making procedures that derive from a Walypala tradition.  
                                     * Decisions made by the Walypala without regard for the point of view of the Yarnangu are ineffective because the Walypala points of view are often irrelevant to the Yarnangu.  
                                     * The Walypala community has historically acted to exclude the Yarnangu from positions of power. |
| Integrated concept B            | A shift in the balance of power between the Yarnangu and the Walypala in order to develop effective decision-making strategies is difficult to achieve in that there is little precedent to build upon and a strong Western-derived ideology and logic to challenge. |
| Substantive theory              | see Table 1.2 (Appendix One) |
### Core categories
(see Table 3.6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grounded hypotheses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B, C, D, I (documented in Chapter Four, section 4.3.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The activity of Aboriginal people in other communities in governing aspects of decision-making may provide the Yarnangu with strategies that may be applied to achieving a Yarnangu-Walypala partnership at Warakurna.

* Many Yarnangu perceive that they are excluded from decision-making authority.

* Some members of the Walypala community work to retain their long-standing advantage over the Yarnangu by promoting a Walypala-derived ideology.

* Yarnangu involvement in decision-making should occur according to strategies that are appropriate to their culture and enable their aspirations to be achieved.

### Properties

| 
|------------------|
| Members of the Walypala community often wish to maintain their traditional dominant position of power in relation to the Yarnangu |

* The Yarnangu feel irrelevant to decision-making processes partly because the ideology behind the decision-making strategies is based on Walypala traditions.

* The involvement of the Yarnangu in decision-making processes must be consistent with culturally appropriate methods, so that the Yarnangu feel as though they can communicate their point of view and achieve their goals.

* The example of other Aboriginal people in governing their communities may present worthwhile ideas for the people at Warakurna to examine.

### Integrated concept C

Power is defined according to the perspectives of the dominant Walypala class, and a shift in the allocation of power would require a redefining of the ideology that underpins the cultural portrayal of power and decision making.

### Substantive theory

see Table 1.2 (Appendix One)
Core categories

(see Table 3.6)

B, C, D, F, K (documented in Chapter Four, section 4.3.3)

Grounded hypotheses

* The 'Yarnangu are prepared to accept the opportunity to become involved in the decision-making and specific operations of the school within certain cultural parameters.
* The 'Yarnangu are aware of their disadvantage in not being able to make decisions with regard to key features of their lives.
* The 'Yarnangu are often able to make decisions and devise strategies regarding community development that are more effective than those made by Walypala decision-makers.
* The Walypala are reluctant to share power with the 'Yarnangu despite the apparent effectiveness of the decisions and actions of the 'Yarnangu.
* The 'Yarnangu attempt to share ideas and strategies with other local communities so that they can move forward together.
* The 'Yarnangu are aware that many of the Walypala are not willing to share power with them.

Properties

* The counterproductive nature of the decisions that are made by the Walypala on behalf of the 'Yarnangu.
* The willingness of the 'Yarnangu to become involved in decision-making according to Walypala methods as long as they feel that their Walypala partners are genuine about the involvement.
* Walypala reluctance to share power with the 'Yarnangu.
* The extent to which the 'Yarnangu are aware that they are disadvantaged in their interaction with the Walypala.
* The 'Yarnangu desire to make decisions and embark upon change at the same time as the 'Yarnangu in other communities in the local area.

Integrated concept D

Decisions made and actions undertaken by 'Yarnangu community representatives are likely to be more effective than those that have been carried out by Walypala decision-makers and, as a result, it is desirable that the Walypala take personal and professional steps to facilitate the allocation of power to the 'Yarnangu in order to take advantage of the willingness of many 'Yarnangu to become involved in the development of the Nguanyatjarra Lands.

Substantive theory

see Table 1.2 (Appendix One)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core categories (see Table 1.6)</th>
<th>A, D, F, G, H (documented in Chapter Four, section 4.4.1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grounded hypotheses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Informal interaction between the Yarnungu community and the Walyalpa teachers is important in resulting in decisions that will lead to the development of a genuine school-community partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Formal meeting processes from a Walyalpa tradition are not necessarily consistent with Yarnungu-preferred decision-making methods and may result in the Yarnungu becoming frustrated and marginalised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The Yarnungu establish relationships on the basis of quality, meaning and sharing rather than according to purpose and function.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Walyalpa-dominated decision-making processes can prevent the Yarnungu from having genuine involvement in participation and so may lead to poor decisions being made in regard to the development of communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The Yarnungu prefer to interact with others where friendship and personal affiliation govern the nature of the interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Many aspects of formal decision-making processes derive from Walyalpa cultural practices and so may be contrary to the values and practices of the Yarnungu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Formal meeting and decision-making methods have traditionally excluded the Yarnungu from having a genuine involvement in the processes that resulted in many decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated concept F</td>
<td>Decisions that are made in partnership with the Yarnungu should be made according to processes that are consistent with the traditions and expectations of the Yarnungu if that partnership is to achieve its objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive theory</td>
<td>see Table 1.2 (Appendix One)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core categories (see Table 3.6)</td>
<td>F, H (documented in Chapter Four, sect on 4.4.3 &amp; 4.4.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded hypotheses</td>
<td>* Positive informal relationships between the <em>Yarnangu</em> and the <em>Wakypa</em> are the basis for being able to make appropriate decisions for the benefit of everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Building strong relationships between the <em>Yarnangu</em> and the <em>Wakypa</em> takes continual effort from members of both groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The development of a strong and genuine partnership between the <em>Yarnangu</em> and the <em>Wakypa</em> can expose and challenge the myths upon which the perceptions that are held about each other by members of each group have historically been built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>* Decisions that are made for the benefit of communities are best made when the <em>Wakypa</em> and the <em>Yarnangu</em> work in partnership according to cultural values, beliefs and practices that can best interpret particular situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The development of relationships between people from different cultures requires ongoing personal commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Individuals from <em>Yarnangu</em> and <em>Wakypa</em> groups hold certain long-standing perceptions about each other that possess a mythological status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated concept C</td>
<td>Cultural differences and a long-standing lack of interaction between the <em>Yarnangu</em> and the <em>Wakypa</em> have fostered a number of myths about each group and these must be appreciated when decisions are made as a function of the emerging partnership between the groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive theory</td>
<td>see Table 1.2 (Appendix Cne)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Categories

F, G, H, I, K (documented in Chapter Four, section 4.5.2)

### Grounded hypotheses

- Decisions made by the *Yarrangu* in proper consultation with appropriate *Walypala* officers may not be accepted by senior *Walypala* decision makers.
- Culturally appropriate methods, language and protocols should be observed in order to involve the *Yarrangu* in decision making procedures.
- While decisions may be made by the *Yarrangu* that apply specifically to the Warakurna school, consideration is always given to the schooling needs throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.
- Consideration should be given to the cultural values and attitudes of the *Yarrangu* when establishing institutions and structures in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

### Properties

- Externally based *Walypala* do not always accept the decisions that are made by the *Yarrangu* at the local level.
- The culture of the *Yarrangu* should be recognised when decision-making methods, organisations, and structures are designed.
- The *Yarrangu* prefer to implement charge as a regional community rather than at individual sites.
- A measure of the effectiveness of decisions that are made by the *Yarrangu* is the extent to which they are implemented by other communities.

### Integrated concept H

A genuine partnership between the *Yarrangu* and the *Walypala* is one that applies to all levels of decision-making because the culturally derived processes and strategies that are observed by the *Yarrangu* are very different from those of the *Walypala* and their implementation must redefine the relationship between the *Yarrangu* and the *Walypala* at all levels of interaction.

### Substantive theory

see Table 1.2 (Appendix One)
Formal schooling influences some aspects of traditional education, but traditional education through the Law is still of prime importance.

The Yarnangu see formal schooling as having a valuable function though for different reasons between individuals, but all see the Law as being very important to the continuation of Yarnangu society.

Formal schooling and the influence of features of Walypala society may be seen as presenting a challenge to the process of socialising the Yarnangu youth.

The Yarnangu have little history of active involvement in the development of schooling in the Ngaanytjarra Lands.

The history of schooling in the Ngaanytjarra Lands has been dominated by Walypala teachers.

Schools act as a cultural relay and as an instrument of socialising and promoting the Walypala culture.

Schools should be places where Walypala-derived academic skills and certain features of the Yarnangu culture can be taught.

The Walypala knowledge base and the Yarnangu knowledge base should be treated as valuable components of the curriculum and the ideology that underpins it.

The Yarnangu and the Walypala can work together to develop certain curricula and pedagogy using features of the interpretations of the background experiences of each group.

The Yarnangu are able to conduct meetings that are more effective than those organised by the Walypala.

Members of the Walypala section of the community often work to exclude the Yarnangu from positions of real authority and decision-making power.

The Yarnangu have historically been excluded from involvement in schools and so myths or 'secrets' have emerged about the value, roles and relevancy of the Yarnangu culture and skills to the schooling process.

The Yarnangu have aspirations that schools should recognise and attempt to meet with the assistance of the local community.

There are certain social expectations of the Yarnangu community that must be appreciated by schools if schools are to retain the confidence and support of the community.

There is an appreciation within the Yarnangu community that the Yarnangu should train to become teachers.
**Properties**

- Formal schooling is based on an ideology that generally derives from the *Walypala* culture.
- The practice of traditional Law by the *Yarnangu* is of prime importance in ensuring the future of their society.
- Formal schooling is valued by the *Yarnangu*.
- The *Yarnangu* have historically been excluded from involvement in the schooling process and have been seen by the *Walypala* to have little to contribute to school development.
- Schools socialise students according to a particular ideology that may work to denigrate the *Yarnangu* culture.
- There is a place for students to experience elements of the *Walypala* and the *Yarnangu* cultures during the process of schooling.
- The ideology of a school should be revised if the *Yarnangu* are to be involved in the governance of the school.
- The knowledge and skills of the *Yarnangu* (including the vernacular) are valuable when designing the learning experiences of students.
- Members of the *Walypala* community often provide *Yarnangu* employees with trivial and unskilled work and so sustain myths about the capacity of the *Yarnangu* to be involved in decision-making and to limit the amount of information that is shared with the *Yarnangu*.
- The *Yarnangu* see schooling as a valuable tool to help achieve their aspirations.
- Practices that occur within the school will only be effective by any measure if they fit within certain broad culturally determined parameters that are designed by the local community.
- The *Yarnangu* see the need for them to take up responsibilities currently filled by the *Walypala*.

**Integrated concept I**

- The long-standing ideology upon which formal schooling has been based should be revised if the genuine involvement of the *Yarnangu* in the governance, curriculum and operations of the school is to be achieved.

**Integrated concept J**

- The school has an important function according to the expectations of the *Yarnangu* but within a context that recognises and values the significance of traditional cultural practices.

**Substantive theory**

- see Table 1.2 (Appendix One)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core categories</th>
<th>D, E, F, G (documented in Chapter Four, section 4.7.1 &amp; 4.7.3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(see Table 3.6)</td>
<td>* It is difficult to restrict the redistribution of power within a community to just one sector of the community: the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded hypotheses</td>
<td>* Many Walypala respond in a defensive fashion to changes that they perceive as a threat to their historic roles and interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Many Walypala treat the Yarnangu in an autocratic manner in order to preserve the unequal distribution of power and to ensure that the ideology of the community is defined according to their terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The Walypala generally exclude the Yarnangu from decision-making involvement in key areas of community development such as financial and enterprise areas, and this may cause considerable frustration for some of the Yarnangu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The practice, values and beliefs of the Walypala are influenced to some extent by the expectations of externally based Walypala organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Deliberate decisions are made by many Walypala to deny the Yarnangu control over key elements of their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* An ideology exists within the Walypala community that denigrates the Yarnangu culture and constructs structures and institutions that operate to reinforce its precepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* A partnership between the Walypala and the Yarnangu should be developed under the umbrella of Yarnangu authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>* When a redistribution in power relations occurs in one area, it is likely that its effects will be felt in other areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Individuals' cherished ideologies sustain a number of myths that describe and classify individuals and groups and determine where power should be located.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The Yarnangu cannot currently undertake all of the responsibilities of community management because of a lack of training and so a partnership between the Walypala and them should include training of the Yarnangu and the Walypala performing certain duties under the authority and governance of appropriate Yarnangu decision-makers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* External Walypala agents impose certain responsibilities and processes upon communities to report in particular ways and to follow strict management guidelines which tend to exclude the involvement of many Yarnangu in community development issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Many Yarnangu become frustrated when they are excluded from involvement in making decisions that affect them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Integrated concept K

The development of a school-based partnership between the Walypala and the Yarnangu must occur within the context of a redistribution of power throughout the entire community and a design that promotes the authority of Yarnangu decision-making.

### Substantive theory

see Table 1.2 (Appendix One)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core categories (see Table 3.6)</th>
<th>E, F, G, I (documented in Chapter Four, section 4.7.2-4.7.5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grounded hypotheses</td>
<td>* Walypala teachers see professional and personal benefits in the redistribution of power between the Yarnangu and the Walypala because they have been involved in formulating the process of change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The governance of the school as a partnership between the Yarnangu and the Walypala teachers can bring about positive results for the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Members of the Yarnangu community are aware of their disadvantage and this is reflected in their lack of power to control key aspects of their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Non-school Walypala employees in Warakurna strongly oppose the allocation of power to the Yarnangu, at least partly, because they have had no involvement in designing the change initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The Walypala tend to govern some organisations that have been established to help the Yarnangu achieve their aspirations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Members of the Reference Group provide appropriate leadership in assuming governance of the school at Warakurna and throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Lands because they have the endorsement of the traditional decision-makers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Properties | * Walypala teachers are often prepared to support the change in school governance as an act of faith and embrace the positive nature of the changes.  
* Non-school employed Walypala may respond to change in the school as a threat and react by entering into conflict because of fear for the status of their positions.  
* The Yarnangu are aware of actions that disadvantage them by excluding them from opportunities to control their lives.  
* Walypala employees sometimes take control of organisations that have been established to help the Yarnangu to achieve their goals.  
* A small leadership group of high-status Yarnangu individuals is able to bring about change in communities. |
<p>| Integrated concept E | The Walypala respond in different ways to shifts in the distribution of power with some resisting the prospect because they may lose their positions of authority while others are prepared to take steps of faith to support the leadership shown by the Yarnangu because they see such leadership as the way to make the most beneficial decisions for the communities and themselves. |
| Substantive theory | see Table 1.2 (Appendix One) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core categories</th>
<th>D, F, E, I (documented in Chapter Four, section 4.7.4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Grounded hypotheses | * There are many myths and belief systems that have been used to rationalise Walypala dominance over the Yarnangu.  
* The Yarnangu feel increasingly dissatisfied with the autocratic way in which they are dealt with by Walypala officers.  
* Many Walypala employees act with a sense of goodwill towards the Yarnangu but will only interact with the Yarnangu along particular lines and according to certain beliefs.  
* The Walypala control the key aspects of the operation and development of the community and, in so doing, tend to ignore the views of the Yarnangu.  
* Walypala officers living outside of Warakuma do not necessarily make decisions that are appropriate to meeting the aspirations of the Yarnangu because the decisions are made with little consultation with the Yarnangu. |
| Properties | * Many Walypala act in paternalistic and discriminatory ways towards the Yarnangu because they feel that such behaviour is appropriate and to the benefit of the Yarnangu.  
* Many of the Yarnangu are dissatisfied with the way in which they are treated by Walypala officers because they want more autonomy.  
* The action of the Yarnangu Reference Group provides leadership in dealing with difficult issues in the community.  
* Walypala employees tend to exclude the Yarnangu from decision-making roles and responsibilities.  
* The opinions and aspirations of the Yarnangu are generally ignored by Walypala employees.  
* Walypala agents living outside of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands do not work in close partnership with the Yarnangu when important decisions are to be made. |
<p>| Integrated concept | * Walypala, both in the community and outside, often act in what they perceive are the best interests of the Yarnangu but ignorant of the aspirations and opinions of the Yarnangu, and so cause tension and conflict to develop when Yarnangu leaders desire to bring about more appropriate change within the community. |
| Substantive theory | see Table 1.2 (Appendix One) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core categories</th>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Grounded hypotheses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(see Table 3.6)</td>
<td>* The <em>Walypala</em> are reluctant to release power to the <em>Yarnangu</em> and employ a number of techniques to minimise the requests and significance of change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Leadership shown by the <em>Yarnangu</em> involves facilitating a whole community movement towards achieving greater autonomy.</td>
<td>* Many <em>Walypala</em> officers both within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands and outside of the area are reluctant to release the power that they have historically held and tend to rationalise their behaviour as being in the best interests of the <em>Yarnangu</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Specific developments in the redistribution of power within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands are often opposed by affected members of the <em>Walypala</em> community.</td>
<td>* The <em>Yarnangu</em> have historically had little involvement in the decision-making processes within the community and have had little power to change unsatisfactory situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* When placed under pressure to surrender power to the <em>Yarnangu</em>, members of the <em>Walypala</em> community often attempt to ‘cool off’ or side-track the <em>Yarnangu</em> by reducing requests for fundamental change to change that is more peripheral and unimportant.</td>
<td>* A small group of properly appointed leaders within the <em>Yarnangu</em> community are able to bring about fundamental change in community-school relations by following a carefully designed strategy that centres on all of the <em>Yarnangu</em> moving together towards certain objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The emergence of the Principal Consultant’s position was initially met with considerable concern by some <em>Walypala</em> officers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* The <em>Walypala</em> are reluctant to release power to the <em>Yarnangu</em> and employ a number of techniques to minimise the requests and significance of change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Leadership shown by the <em>Yarnangu</em> involves facilitating a whole community movement towards achieving greater autonomy.</td>
<td>* Specific developments in the redistribution of power within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands are often opposed by affected members of the <em>Walypala</em> community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The achievement of positions of power by the historically disadvantaged <em>Yarnangu</em> community is strongly resisted by members of the <em>Walypala</em> who use a number of techniques to minimise what they perceive as significant threats from the change.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>see Table 1.2 (Appendix One)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core categories (see Table 3.6)</td>
<td>F, I, J, K (documented in Chapter Five, section 5.2.1 &amp; 5.2.2)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Grounded hypotheses | * The role of the Principal Consultant is to establish a framework of schooling throughout the Ngaanyatjarru Lands that sees the Yarnangu becoming heavily involved in the decisions on the direction of schooling.  
* Initiatives that shift power from the Walypala teachers to the Yarnangu community are strongly opposed by most Lands' principals because they see the change as a threat to their traditional decision-making function in the schools.  
* Because the Yarnangu have historically possessed little power to control their lives, they have had to develop compensatory techniques that emphasise informal processes and passive resistance to deal with perceived threats to the safety and integrity of their families.  
* Externally based Walypala officers are unable to effectively deal with Lands-based problems and concerns. |
| Properties | * The position of Principal Consultant demonstrates an institutional acceptance of the value of locally developed decision-making processes, particularly with the inclusion of appropriate Yarnangu decision-makers.  
* Those who traditionally hold power (the Walypala) are reluctant to release that power to a disadvantaged class (the Yarnangu).  
* The Yarnangu have developed a number of compensatory strategies to deal with their formal exclusion from the power to control their lives, but these strategies are not as effective as actually possessing autonomy as part of the formal structure of society. |
| Integrated concept N | The process of redistributing power between the Yarnangu and the Walypala is best achieved from an institutional position that is accepted throughout the community and involves a fundamental challenge to long-standing community beliefs and values as well as overcoming practices that aim at minimising the effect of change initiatives. |
| Substantive theory | see Table 1.2 (Appendix One) |
### Core categories
(see Table 3.6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grounded hypotheses</th>
<th>Properties</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grounded hypotheses</th>
<th>Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* The effect of fundamental change in the distribution of power between the <em>Yarnangu</em> and the <em>Walypala</em> often causes an emotional response from individuals as well as considerable stress upon personal beliefs and values.</td>
<td>* Fundamental change creates emotional responses and tension between individuals and groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Change processes that occur within organisations and structures involve largely political processes.</td>
<td>* The process of change is largely political in nature, at least in the initial stages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* The occurrence of fundamental change involves considerable uncertainty, doubt, and steps of uncertainty.</td>
<td>* The redistribution of power between the <em>Walypala</em> and the <em>Yarnangu</em> involves acts of faith, uncertainty and doubt in all participants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Integrated concept
The process of change may involve an intensely emotional response to political action between the *Walypala* and the *Yarnangu* and requires individuals and groups to make uncertain steps towards increasingly clear objectives.

### Substantive theory
see Table 1.2 (Appendix One)
Core categories
(see Table 3.6)

| D, E, F, I, J, G, K (documented in Chapter Five, section 5.4.1 & 5.4.2) |

Grounded hypotheses

* The *Yarnangu* prefer to see the development of schooling from a whole of Land’s approach.
* A change in power relations between the *Walypala* and the *Yarnangu* causes a profound revision to the structure and operations of various institutions.
* The change in power relations between the *Walypala* and the *Yarnangu* in the school is followed by the development of increasingly specific objectives and programs with regard to schooling as the *Walypala-Yarnangu* partnership develops.
* Change initiatives are easier to achieve if the change proponents have an institutionally recognised position.
* The support or opposition of *Walypala* officers based outside the Ngaanyatjarra Lands is likely to influence the degree to which a local partnership between the *Yarnangu* and the *Walypala* can achieve its objectives.
* As change processes mature in being able to achieve certain objectives, *Yarnangu* behaviour will become more purposeful in not exhibiting frustration, anger or conflict that is apparent before the *Walypala-Yarnangu* partnership emerges.
* In the opinion of the *Yarnangu*, an effective schooling system is an important tool in helping to achieve the goals of the communities within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

Properties

* The *Yarnangu* prefer to make decisions that benefit the whole group.
* A change in power relations between groups requires that there be a significant change in the nature of structures and institutions.
* As a group achieves power over certain circumstances, it designs programs and establishes goals to address collective needs within that particular area.
* It is easier to bring about fundamental change when the proponents of that change operate from institutionally recognised and respected positions.
* A partnership that has been established between local groups must be respected and endorsed by agents who have senior positions and live outside of the area.
* A channel of communication with officers who carry out various responsibilities reduces the need for community members to respond to decisions in negative and confusing ways.
* A school system is seen to be effective when it meets the aspirations and objectives of the local community.

**Integrated concept P**

* Fundamental change is best achieved by the *Yarnangu* working within organisations and being able to influence structures and institutions in such a way as to help meet their aspirations and to create opportunities for communication and interaction between organisations and communities.

**Substantive theory**

* see Table 1.2 (Appendix One)

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**Core categories**

(see Table 3.6)

**Grounded hypotheses**

* The school council should operate as an institutional part of the school culture in order to foster communication between participants within the school.

* Individuals who are not involved in the development of change initiatives may respond in a more negative way than those who are included in at least the initial consultations.

* Some *Walypala* use formal decision-making mechanisms to prevent the *Yarnangu* from assuming greater responsibilities and autonomy within the community and Nganayatjara Lands.

* Training opportunities should be offered to the *Yarnangu* in order to help them consolidate their gains in taking control of aspects of their communities.
Properties

- The Walypala are reluctant to surrender their long-standing power and control to the Yarnangu.
- There are a number of stages in the empowerment of individuals and groups and these stages require particular skills and attitudes in individuals and groups in order for them to be able to maintain their empowered position.
- Power and authority that shifts from the Walypala to the Yarnangu could just as easily move back to the Walypala at any stage.
- The Reference Group constitutes the leadership that is necessary to promote change in Warakurna and throughout the Lands.

- An institutional role should be established so the Yarnangu can be involved in the governance of the school in order to foster a culture of change.
- Individuals who do not have knowledge of the emergence of a particular change initiative are likely to respond in a negative (defensive) way.
- Those who hold the power over others are unlikely to want to surrender that power to disadvantaged groups.
- If the Yarnangu are going to be able to maintain their newly-won power, individuals must be trained to take over the positions that have traditionally been held by the Walypala.
- Power is a phenomenon that can quickly shift away from the newly empowered but traditionally disadvantaged group to the historically dominant group.
- The possession of power over certain responsibilities should be institutionalised within the culture of the group if the power is to be held over a long period.
- Fundamental change is brought about by a group of committed and widely accepted leaders.

Integrated concept Q

Fundamental change is likely to be successful if it is promoted by individuals who:

(a) Hold positions of status that are accepted by all sections of the community;
(b) Have been able to communicate the nature of the change to all those who may be affected by it;
(c) Can promote the assimilation of power into the culture of the group (including the value of schooling).

Substantive theory

see Table 1.2 (Appendix One)
This table collapses the integrated concepts developed through a series of stages in Table 1.1 into substantive theory.

**Table 1.2**
Substantive theory from the investigation at Warakurna

| Theory A | If power is redistributed between the *Yarnangu* and the *Walypala* in order to foster a partnership between the groups but under the authority of the *Yarnangu*, then the decisions that are made in regard to the future of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands will be seen by the *Yarnangu* and the *Walypala* as effective and relevant. |
| Theory B | If power is redistributed from the *Walypala* to the *Yarnangu* in order to foster effective decision-making in Aboriginal communities, then there must be a fundamental reorientation in the ideologies, structures and institutions that have been constructed as a result of the way in which power has historically been distributed within Australian society. |
| Theory C | The establishment of a genuine partnership between the *Walypala* and the *Yarnangu*, but under *Yarnangu* cultural and increasingly operational autonomy, can only be achieved if all levels of *Walypala* authority within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands as well as outside of the region accept the right of the *Yarnangu* to run their own affairs. |
| Theory D | If a *Walypala-Yarnangu* partnership is to be able to function under *Yarnangu* authority and according to culturally appropriate ways so that the *Yarnangu* can achieve their aspirations, then the ideology that defines the nature of personal and professional interaction between individuals and groups must reflect the concepts of delegated authority, collaborative decision-making, openness, mutual respect, and dialogue. |
| Theory E | In order to achieve fundamental change in Aboriginal communities, the *Walypala* must surrender their historic power. As a result, there is likely to be an emotional response by the *Walypala* with individuals displaying varying degrees of preparedness to enter into a decision-making partnership with the *Yarnangu*. |
In order for the Yarnangu to bring about effective change within the community according to an autonomous model, they should act from institutionally respected positions within existing organisations rather than from outside of the institutions where the historic disadvantage experienced by the Yarnangu is most apparent and the people are most vulnerable.

Because the Walypala have maintained a long-standing dominance over the Yarnangu and this has been institutionalised as an imbalance in the distribution of power between the classes, such a relationship is accepted as rational and equitable according to the perceptions of most of the Walypala, but as discriminatory and oppressive according to the Yarnangu.

If the Yarnangu feel that their aspirations are likely to be achieved and that decision-making strategies will be consistent with traditional processes and under their control, then community members are likely to be willing to be involved in a decision-making partnership with the Walypala (as described in theories A, B, C, D, & G).

The process of change in the distribution of power from the Walypala to the Yarnangu involves persistent political action by the whole of the Yarnangu community, first to bring about desired changes and then to institutionalise and refine those changes in the face of those who would want to overturn the changes.

Action to bring about fundamental change within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands is rarely confined to just one community or section of a community, but participants tend to look for ways to facilitate similar change in other parts of the region. That is, the Yarnangu prefer to bring about change as a whole group rather than as individuals or small segments of the community.

Because of the lack of precedence in creating a decision-making partnership between the Walypala and the Yarnangu, participants must take steps of faith through the agency of sometimes uncertain strategies in order to achieve their aspirations.
APPENDIX TWO

PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLING IN THE NGAANYATJARRA LANDS
APPENDIX TWO

PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLING IN THE NGAANYATJARRA LANDS

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline a structure of schooling that may be appropriate to the needs of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands between 1995-1997.

The document is based on the reflections of a team of people under the leadership of Bernard Newberry (Aboriginal Liaison Officer) and Jim Heslop (acting Principal Consultant) who visited communities during 1994 to conduct awareness meetings. The plan is also based upon the conclusions that were drawn from a series of incidents and discussions that have occurred in recent years.

2.0 Context and aims

There were a number of critical incidents that occurred between 1992 and 1994. These incidents involved local problems in schools that were not resolved in an appropriate way at the local level. This caused the Education Department to send officers, based outside of the Lands, to play a key role in resolving issues. As a result of these local difficulties, it was suggested by the Yarnangu and some Walypala living in the Lands that Aboriginal people in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands take on more responsibility for decision-making in the Lands.

A further aspect of the context of the plan is that, during 1994, a series of workshops were held in all Lands' communities to suggest future directions for education in the area. Under Bernard Newberry's leadership, a number of recommendations were made that were then analysed and reconstructed in the form of proposals for the 1995-1997 period.

The aims of the strategic plan are:
1. To involve a wide variety of Aboriginal people in setting up a decision-making organisation.

2. To allow Lands' problems to be resolved within the Lands and by Lands' personnel.

3. To undertake research and document data in order to create a wider awareness of the issues associated with teaching in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

There has been a growing political awareness within the the Lands. The Ngaanyatjarra Council has sought to establish policy directions in regard to training and enterprise development and has also begun to examine its role in regard to the provision of schooling. It has, for example, written its support for the Principal Consultant's position, has contributed to attempts to resolve schooling based problems, and has promoted the need for the development of post-primary schooling in the region.

In conclusion, there is a growing awareness in the Lands that Aboriginal people are in the best position to handle their own affairs in a wide variety of spheres, including schooling.

3.0 Proposed structure and roles of a Lands' School Board

It is proposed that a *Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board* be established according the following structure:

1. *Yarnangu* representatives from Ngaanyatjarra Lands' communities meet twice each term under the chair of a *Yarnangu* Director of Schools. The board advises the Director of Schools on policy and directions that schooling should take. It also works to resolve specific problems that have implications for all of the Lands. Members of the school board do not receive payment.

2. The Director of Schools is a paid *Yarnangu* person who works with the Princi-
pal Consultant (Walypala until the Yarnangu start to move through teacher education), and primarily addresses issues of liaison with communities and the development of policy in schools. The Director also ensures that Aboriginal employees (AEWs and the ALO) receive appropriate support, including professional development. The director would also be expected to assist in the selection of teachers and represent the Lands on appropriate education policy groups.

3. The Principal Consultant provides oversight of school officers and deals with issues such as resolving crises in schools, school development planning, professional development, and research and policy development. The consultant also represents the Lands on various groups such teacher selection panels, the Priority Country Areas Program (PCAP) and the Priority Schools Program (PSP).

4. The Kalgoorlie District superintendent undertakes quality assurance functions in each school and provides advice to the school board on Education Department expectations. The superintendent also assists in providing professional development to the Principal Consultant and the Director of Schools.

5. The budget of the school board comes from the pooling of regional PCAP and PSP funds as well as the use of Aboriginal Student Support Parent Assistance (ASSPA) funds. According to the guidelines of these funds, communities are supported in framing individual and whole-of-Lands projects. It is reasonable to expect that training and education funds coming from DEET, DCD and other agencies that are currently being channelled through the Nganinyatjarra Council will come under the authority of the school board. Occasional funds for special projects should also be channelled through the board.

6. Schools operate as they are now, but principals, AEWs and the ALO receive advice from the school board. Moreover, as mentioned in point (5), schools relinquish sole supervision of PCAP and ASSPA funds. Principals receive support from the consultant as well as locally-based school development officers. Principals still consult directly with the Kalgoorlie district superintendent and are involved in professional development that is offered within the Kalgoorlie district.
7. The school board receives recommendations for improvements to buildings. In other words, it convenes its own Minor Works panel. The board also receives and makes recommendations to move buildings within the Lands according to shifts in the student population. It also advocates the development of schooling services in new communities in line with Education Department regulations.

8. Visits by non-departmental personnel are authorised by the Director of Schools in consultation with the Principal Consultant.

9. The school board meets in a different community on each occasion.

10. The Principal Consultant and the Director of Schools live in the Lands.

The timetable for the introduction of the school board is summarised in Table 3.1 and the structure and flow of decision-making in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands' School Board is shown in Figure 3.1 (also Figure 5.2).

**Table 3.1**

Timetable for the development and activity of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1995</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February-May</td>
<td>Awareness raising within communities before setting up the school board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>The first meeting of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Establish a vision statement and associated goals of schooling in the Lands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Develop a consensus of priorities for 1995-1996. This will ass-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ist in selecting the type of professional support staff required for 1996.

October-December

Signal developments for 1996 (especially the pooling of PCAP, PSP and ASSPA funds, setting up a Minor Works and Buildings Committee).

Liaise with TAFE representatives.

Work with the Ngaanyatjarra Council to distribute 'after hours activity' funds (DCD derived).

1996

February-April


Conduct the first meeting of the school board for the year.

Conduct the initial Minor Works meeting for the year.

Receive recommendations regarding any movements of buildings.

May-June

Direct the Principal Consultant and Director of Schools on policy and priorities - set up performance indicators in order to be able to report back to the board.

Propose a delegate to become part of the selection panel for Principals Level 3, Remote schools (1997).
July-August

Commence work on writing a Training Plan for the Lands (the role of TAFE).

Nominate delegates to represent the Board on the Ngaanyatjarra Lands’ Curriculum Committee.

Process submissions for use of ASSPA and a percentage of PCAP funds (most would have been committed in 1995 before the Board took control).

Continue to distribute DCD funds.

1997

February-December

Continue to institutionalise changes in 1995-1996.

February-March

Process submissions for all PCAP and PSP funds for the year.

March

Nominate a delegate to join the Goldfields Area Committee of PCAP.

Receive and discuss a report on the implementation of Student Outcome Statements in schools for the year (expected to be a priority).


Organise aspects of induction program for new staff.
April-May

Establish a reporting format for schools - annual public reports of school progress in meeting school development plan objectives. Also gain agreement on the co-endorsing of school plans with the Kalgoorlie district superintendent particularly in ensuring that agreed priorities are being met and that the community has been involved in the planning.

Figure 3.1
Structure of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board and the flow of decision-making

Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board (Ngaanyatjarra Lands)
- representatives from Lands' communities

Principal Consultant ← Director of Schools

School development officers ← ALO

Principals

Teachers ← AEW
5.0 Role descriptions

5.1 Principal Consultant

The functions of the Principal Consultant are expected to evolve during the period of the strategic plan. From the beginning of 1995, the following roles are appropriate for the consultant to fulfil:

* Oversight of school development officers

* Assist in training members of the school board

* Assist in budget supervision and processing submissions for PCAP, PSP and ASSPA

* Work with schools in crisis resolution

* Assist with school operational planning

* Organise conferences and other professional development for school staff (teaching and non-teaching)

* Contract with individual schools regarding work on special projects

* Assist with performance appraisal in some circumstances (for example, acting principals who are also temporary teachers)

* Represent the Lands on various committees

* Act as a liaison officer with external agents.
5.2 Director of Schools

* Act as a liaison officer with communities in promoting Lands decision-making
* Assist in resolving crises
* Develop training packages for AEWs
* Act as a delegate on various committees
* Conduct awareness and reporting meetings in communities
* Act as a 'first port of call' for contact with outside personnel
* Chair the Lands’ School Board.

6.0 Conclusion

The plan for development of local involvement and participation in Lands’ schooling is likely to be further developed during the period of the plan. This document is just a framework.

The aim of the plan is to involve the Yarnangu in the schooling process and begin to devolve important aspects of decision-making to the local area.

The process will need to proceed with maximum consultation with all sectors of the school community.

Jim Heslop
A/Principal Consultant
30 November 1994
APPENDIX THREE

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS DURING THE COURSE OF RESEARCH
APPENDIX THREE

TIMELINE OF SOME SIGNIFICANT EVENTS DURING THE COURSE OF THE RESEARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 February 1992</td>
<td>Arrive in Warakurna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 March 1992</td>
<td>Research proposal approved by community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reference Group established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April-Dec 1992</td>
<td>Parent meetings held at the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 November 1992</td>
<td>Reference Group expanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1993</td>
<td>Decision to establish the Parents' Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-Dec 1993</td>
<td>Meetings of Parents' Council (three times per term)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1993</td>
<td>Punmu visit (by Bernard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bernard becomes seriously ill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1993</td>
<td>Arnhem Land visit (by Garry, Jim, Bruce)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 November 1993</td>
<td>Youth Training workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 December 1993</td>
<td>Awareness workshop (Warakurna)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-Dec 1994</td>
<td>Parents’ Council meetings (three per term)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 March 1994</td>
<td>Karrku school incident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4 1994</td>
<td>T___ violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2 1994</td>
<td>Tjirrkarli school closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 June 1994</td>
<td>Principal Consultant’s position commenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 June 1994</td>
<td>Tjirrkarli school reopened (itinerant service)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 June 1994</td>
<td>Violence at W___ (payback against teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 June 1994</td>
<td><em>Australasian Post</em> article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1994</td>
<td>Yarnangu enterprise group established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 September 1994</td>
<td>Tjirrkarli school reopened as a full-time service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 October 1995</td>
<td>Change to the role of ALO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 December 1994</td>
<td>Conclusion of field work at Warakurna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1997</td>
<td>Implementation of strategic plan in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>